Understanding Power: The Prospects for Indigenous Resistance to a Proposed Mega-dam in Rural Honduras

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Chapter I. Introduction

> Cuando haiga represa yo pienso que es una cuestión casimente de muerte, porque nosotros siempre hemos dicho esto es un extermino lento de los pueblos indígenos que viven en La Mosquitia.
>
> [When the dam is built I think it is a matter of almost death, because we have always said this is a slow extermination of the native peoples living in La Mosquitia.]
>
> -Lorenzo Tinglas, Tawahka activist, (personal communication, 5/24/2011)

For the month of May 2011, I participated in fieldwork in Honduras with Dr. Kendra McSweeney and graduate student Zoe Pearson of The Ohio State University's Geography Department. We constituted a unique team of professor, graduate, and undergraduate. Led by McSweeney, a seasoned researcher in our region of study, the goal of our research was to explore the affects of climate change on indigenous groups in the rainforests of La Moskitia region of remote eastern Honduras and likewise indigenous resiliency against increasing climatic variability.

Resiliency and resistance became the underlying and recurrent themes of our research. The indigenous Tawahka live within the 2,300 square kilometer Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve (RBTA) located between the Patuca National Park and the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve (Figure 1) (McSweeney, 2002). Within this reserve, the Tawahka subsist through "lowland agroforestry and upland swidden-fallow agriculture, supplemented by animal husbandry, fishing, hunting, and foraging" (McSweeney, 2002, p. 401). Their five communities are remotely located in La Moskitia where there are no roads or other infrastructure, and the Patuca River, the longest river in Honduras, and its tributaries are the only highways in and out of the RBTA.

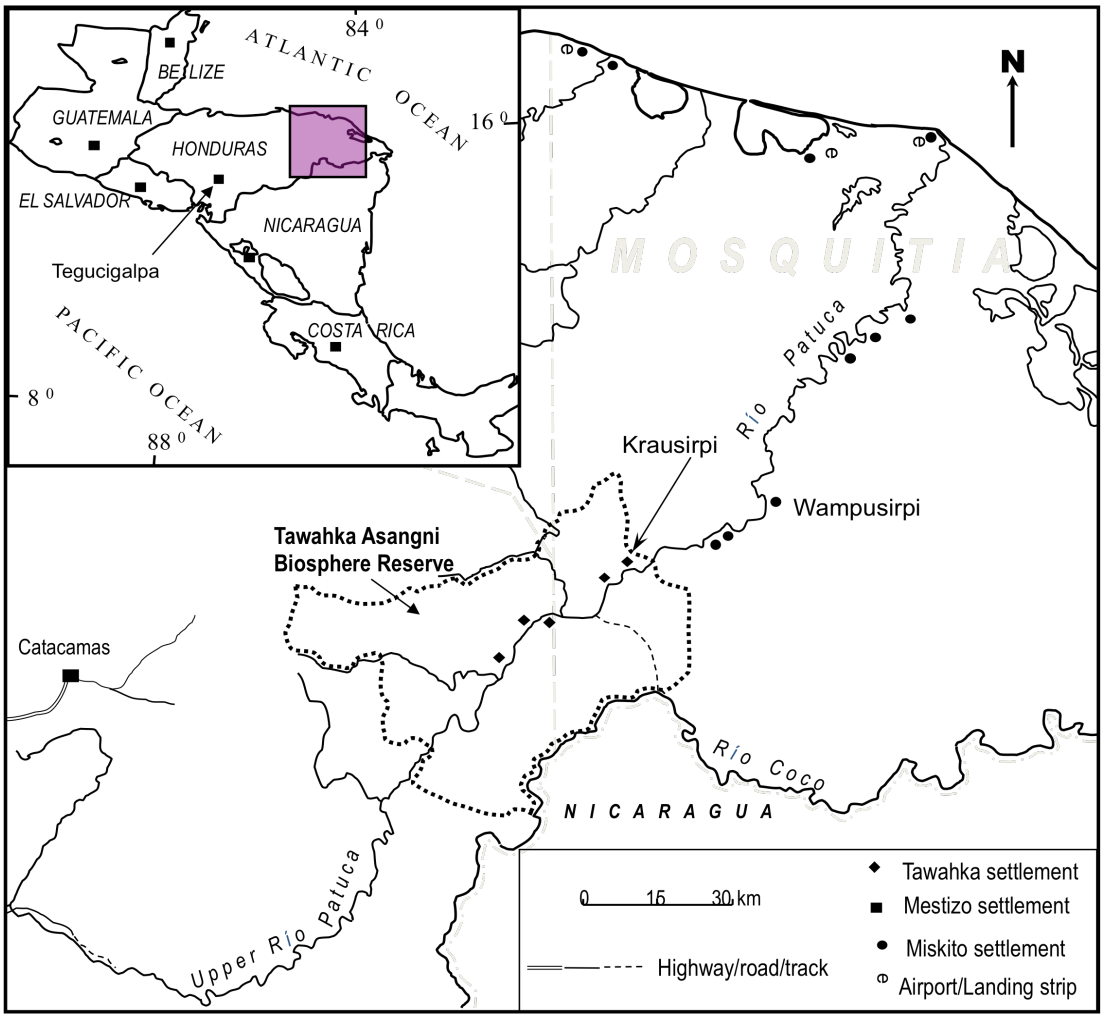

Figure 1: Map of La Moskitia and Tawahka, *mestizo* (*ladino*), and Miskito settlements along the Patuca River (McSweeney, 2002).

Yet, as remotely located as these approximately 1500 people are, climate change is not the sole menace endangering the Tawahka; federal and international actors and issues creep into the reserve, threatening the livelihoods of the Tawahka, constantly undermining Tawahka culture and daily life. As observed through fieldwork, these actors and issues present themselves in complex ways, sometimes combining and sometimes offsetting each other.

By 2011, Honduras had been in a state of chaos and turmoil. Since June 2009, democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya was ousted from his post through a military

coup d'état and was eventually replaced by current conservative President Porfirio Lobo (Joyce, 2010). This administration has cultivated a climate of increased violence, oppression, and fear throughout Honduras. The state has worked to eliminate government officials, journalists, and any other opposition to the regime. Further, the government and business elite of Honduras are welcoming foreign direct investment from countries such as China to build infrastructure and energy projects through a campaign called 'Honduras Is Open for Business' ("Honduras Open for Business," 2011 May 10), opening up the people, industries, and natural resources of Honduras, and particularly La Moskitia, for exploitation. According to an American scientist working in Honduras, these interconnected relationships between corrupt and aggressive politicians and businessmen have paved the way for increased narco-trafficking and the guns and violence that accompany it (K. McSweeney, personal communication, 6/23/2011). As these values take precedent in the national arena, the indigenous voice is persistently squeezed out of the conversation, where it already has limited room for consideration. Yet, all the while this institutionalized and systematic oppression is being carried out, a surge of widespread resistance has gained momentum in Honduras (Frank, 2010).

Focus of Research: The Patuca Dams Project

This thesis specifically focuses on how these forces relate to an impending threat to Tawahka livelihoods: a proposed three-part mega-dam project, appropriately known as Patuca III, to be built on the Patuca River. Chinese dam builder Sinohydro, who built the infamous Three Gorges Dam, and Chinese financier Export-Import (EXIM) Bank confirmed the project in February 2011, which will include three dam sites: Patuca II (or La Valencia), Patuca IIA (or

Tarrosa), and Patuca III (or Piedras Amarillas) in the eastern Department of Olancho (Figure 2) (Republic of Honduras, 2011).

By all accounts, damming the Patuca River will result in an environmental and social disaster. Further, it is unclear whether or not the dams will produce their potential in hydropower. Without the Patuca III dam, the Patuca II dam site would fill with sediment preventing the generation of electricity (K. McSweeney, personal communication, 6/23/2011). However, with the addition of Patuca III in Sinohydro's proposal, it is still unknown how well the dams would or would not function and if the project could be sustainable in the long-term. It has been suggested that a set of several small dams, rather than two or three large ones, is a much more feasible alternative (K. McSweeney, personal communication, 6/23/2011). Regardless, it is doubtful the dams will fulfill Honduras' demand for electricity, and hopeless to imagine rural electrification for Tawahka and other indigenous communities.

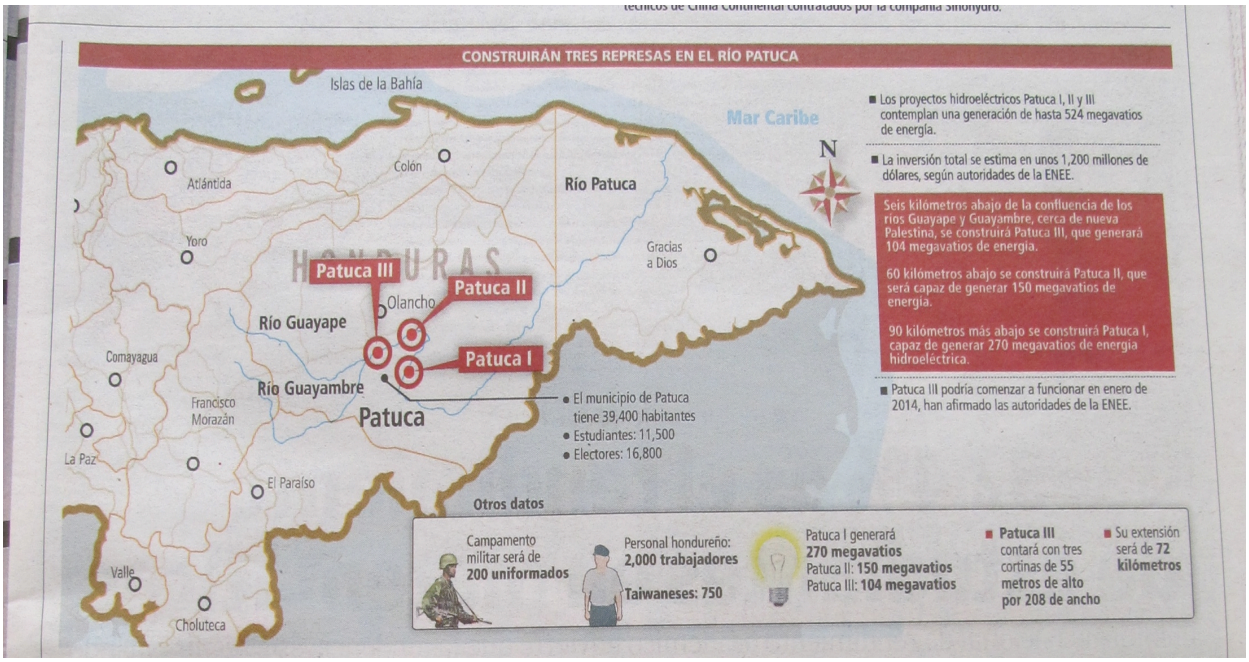

Figure 2: Dam locations as proposed for the Patuca III project. The dam sites are often referred to as Patuca I, II, and III in the media, instead of II, IIa, and III. ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca III," 2011 May 10).

Research Questions and Hypothesis

This research will be in part guided by history. Specifically, I look to past proposals to dam the Patuca River in a project known as Patuca II, which never came to fruition because of the infeasibility of the project and the huge indigenous resistance movement against it. Second, I explore a dam that was constructed: the El Cajón mega-dam built in western Honduras in 1985. I hypothesize that the forces of China's growing role in Latin American development, trade liberalization of the state of Honduras, the military coup d'état in 2009, and increased narco-trafficking and land grabs are setting the stage for the imminent construction of Patuca III, unless the resistance movement against the project can prevent construction. The Patuca II project and El Cajón as two examples suggest different possibilities for Patuca III, demanding exploration of the following:

- Why is the Patuca III project moving forward?
- What hope is there for an indigenous resistance to stall or even stop construction of the dams?

Sub-questions to better inform these two main research questions include:

- How is the current climate in Honduras advancing Patuca III, making this proposal different from previous proposals? Is this climate one that is different from the past?
- Is history repeating itself with this particular project and, if built, share the same failures as El Cajón? If so, how can the failure of mega-dam El Cajón inform this project?
- Are there, yet again, windows of opportunity for resistance and for alternative solutions?

Conceptual Approach

The discipline of Geography greatly emphasizes space and time when looking at the world. Specifically, there is a focus on places and the extra-local processes occurring in them. I follow this specialty of the discipline in my research by exploring interactions and relationships

that are place-based. This at first may be broken into scales of international, national, regional, and local, but often in this research, these layers are complexly intertwined. Instead, we can more plainly see international and national agendas unfolding in multi-sited, extra-local processes. This is the case for gigantic and seemingly distance forces, such as Chinese dam builders and financiers and Honduran elites, convening into specific processes in what appears to be the remote and insignificant Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve.

Within Geography, I employ a specific approach to my research. I draw on the outlook of political ecology to explore the interactions and relationships governing the future of the Patuca Dams. Political ecology is a "field of critical research predicted on the assumption that any tug on the strands of the global web of human-environment linkages reverberates throughout the system as a whole" (Robbins, 2004, p. 5). The name itself indicates there are political processes that govern human-environment relationships (Robbins, 2004). Therefore, environmental conditions and the dynamics changing them cannot be described apolitically; research is based in explorations to explain linkages between society and the environment with explicit recognition of the always-present unequal distributions of power (Robbins, 2004).

These relationships often play out on several scales: local, regional, national, and global, but in this analysis, I stray from this strict form of methodology because these scales are not clearly manifested (Marston et al., 2005). I instead look to Marston et al.'s explanation of a flat topology, a geography without scales, which focuses on networks or an "ontology composed of complex, emergent spatial relations" (2005, p. 422). Here, global and local forces overlap and entwine creating complex power relations and agendas that transcend traditional scales. These intricate and multifaceted relationships play out in space and time resulting in winners and losers.

In regards to Patuca III, my focus is to study the linked actors on a multi-sited and often extra-local topology that are facilitating both the construction of the dams and resistance against them, which will lead to social and ecological change in La Moskitia. I apply the political ecology approach in order to describe the prominent power relationships that will lead to winners and losers. By doing so, I will expose the similarities and differences between the past proposals for the Patuca II project and the mid-1980s construction of El Cajón. However, this exploration of Patuca III is not necessarily one of a unique project. Damming of the Patuca River has never been realized, like it has in other parts of Honduras under similar conditions (i.e. El Cajón), but generally speaking, infrastructure projects like Patuca III are being accelerated all over the world, from Latin America to Africa to Asia. Although Patuca III is not unique in being an accelerated dam project, it is exceptional because of the resistance movements that have been attached to attempts to dam the Patuca. Therefore, those taking a similar approach as I am in studying dams can use Patuca III as a case for other areas of the globe where similar forces and relationships are emerging.

A Look to History: Patuca II

The idea of damming the Patuca River has been floated since at least the 1970s. Concrete proposals have been made at three separate points by international firms and investors. The first was in 1998 when the American hydropower company Panda Energy and American firm Harza Engineering proposed the project Patuca II named for its two dam sites. The project was resurrected again in 2008 initially led by the above American corporations and then Taiwanese investment from Sinotech and contracted engineering from Taipower. Neither set of dams was built.

Project Name	Proposal Year	Involved Actors
Patuca II	1998	Panda Energy, Harza Engineering, IDB, World Bank
Patuca II	2008	Panda Energy, Harza Engineering, Sinotech, Taipower
Patuca III	2011 (present project)	Sinohydro, Chinese EXIM Bank

*Note: The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has had ongoing involvement in funding environmental and social impact assessments, whether or not the bank is funding the project. The 2008 proposal has also been called Patuca III, but it is my understanding that the third dam to be located at Piedras Amarillas was developed under Chinese engineering.

At the time of the Patuca II proposal in 1998, the project would have been the second largest land modification in Central America after the Panama Canal (Bassi, 2001). According to the indigenous produced Plataforma Critica Patuca II (1998), this project was located at the confluence of the Cuyamel and Patuca Rivers, about 8 km southwest of the RBTA. Work by indigenous grassroots organizations and NGOs, including US based International Rivers and Cultural Survival, helped put a stop to the construction of Patuca II. They renounced construction because of poorly prepared environmental and social impact assessments and potential violation of international law (Bassi, 2001).

Other aspects of the project were also lacking: no reliable flow data existed about the river, no public hearings were held, and the agencies involved were inexperienced (Bassi, 2001). The lack of standards violated Honduran Environmental Law and the International Labor Organization's Agreement No. 169 requiring indigenous participation and the protection of their land rights (Bassi, 2001). In 1999, Harza Engineering was said to pull out of Patuca II because of lack of popular support for the project (Griffin, 1999), as well as the devastation caused by

Hurricane Mitch in 1998, which caused an enormous surge of rainfall to flood the unpredictable Patuca River (McSweeney & Coomes, 2011). Thus, there were speculations as to whether or not a hydropower dam would be ever feasible on the Patuca River, and in the case of the 2008 proposal, rumors circulated that Chinese investment and political clout threatened the Taiwanese proposals.

Despite the known negative impacts that large-scale dams cause on ecosystems and communities (e.g., adverse impacts on human dependence on rivers, fisheries production, flood-based agriculture, livestock management and other culture-specific dependencies, and economic values of riparian ecosystems (Richter et al., 2010)), and the previously discussed problems specific to the Patuca River (i.e.: no data, poor choice of river, violation of laws and rights), Chinese firms and the federal Honduran government are set to construct the dams. Although the Patuca Dams were tabled during Zelaya's administration, this project has been encouraged and hastened by President Lobo's administration, such as through the introduction of a General Law of Water to promote the use of water to create energy and development in Honduras. Indeed, construction began when Lobo broke ground in May 2011.

A Honduran Mega-dam Case Study: The Failure of El Cajón

The proposed Patuca Dams Project is not a totally unique project to Honduras. I will draw heavily on *The Globalizers* by Jeffrey T. Jackson, a book that thoroughly investigates the known failures of the mega-dam known as "El Cajón." I will use El Cajón, which was brought into production in western Honduras in 1985, as a case to draw parallels between the climate surrounding the construction of El Cajón and the proposed Patuca III project today.

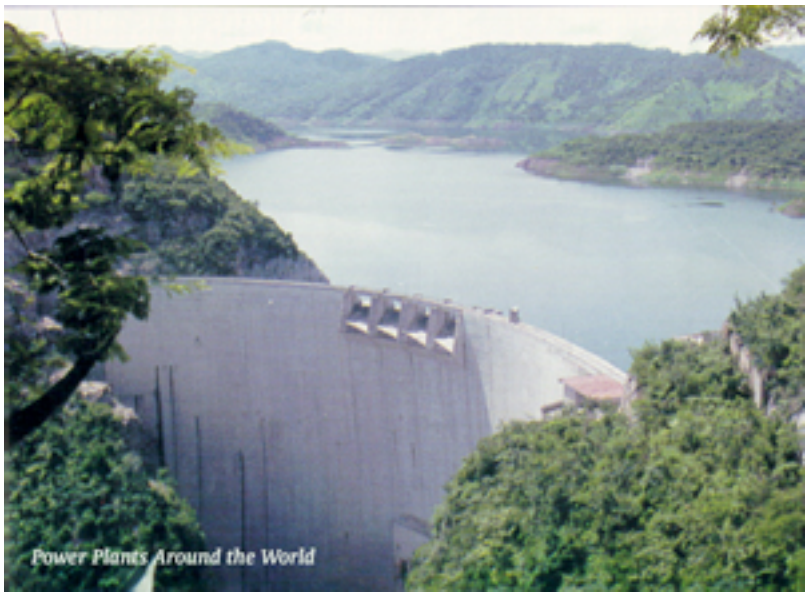

Photo of El Cajón (Proyecto Regional de Energía Eléctrica del Istmo Centroamericano, 2006).

El Cajón was erected to promote infrastructure and industry by linking Honduras to the electrical grid of Central America, to allow export of electricity to other countries, and to fulfill Honduras' chronic domestic demand for energy (Jackson, 2005). The execution of this project relied on international contracts, national and regional banks, and cooperation of Honduras' energy agency, Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica (ENEE), with both state and international actors. By 1994, El Cajón was not producing its energy potential and a widespread energy crisis ensued in Honduras (Jackson, 2005). Ultimately, a project initially meant to spur economic development in Honduras left the nation in crippling debt. Although no one was talking about the failure of El Cajón during my experience in Honduras, I believe it has strong parallels to Patuca III that can help inform this project, particularly in terms of understanding how and why "development" proceeds even when the process and outcome are deeply flawed.

The Story of El Cajón

In 1985, with resources from development banks and international contractors, mega-dam El Cajón was built at the confluence of the Suyapa and Humuya Rivers (Figure 3). At the time of its construction, El Cajón was an exceptionally ambitious engineering feat; the dam stands at 714 feet tall, making it the highest dam in the Western Hemisphere and the 8th largest in the world at the time (Jackson, 2005). The purpose of this large-scale project was two-fold: to build infrastructure and industry in Honduras as well as to fulfill Honduras' domestic energy needs and to export surplus energy to Central American nations after connecting Honduras to the energy grid (Jackson, 2005). This project was meant to transform the country by accelerating economic development and integrating Honduras into a competitive global network, thus pulling Honduras out of economic underdevelopment, so to speak.

Figure 3: Map of Honduras with El Cajón. (Loker, n.d.)

For such a large, demanding project, how was the process of choosing a location and of constructing the dam informed? Perhaps the better question in this instance is how was El Cajón *mis*informed, what information was left out? The collection of data was lacking to say the least and what was inventoried was often neglected in the process of planning and construction. In terms of feasibility studies, data should have been collected on the riverbed, rainfall, sedimentation, biodiversity, deforestation rates, downstream impacts and water quality, cost-effectiveness, and alternative projects, among other factors that could have been included (Jackson, 2005).

Amongst agencies actively involved, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and ENEE, the following data were collected. The basin in which the dam was built was being eroded by the river from the top layer of volcanic rock down to the limestone, and therefore, had to be plugged with cement because of potential leaks (Jackson, 2005). Further, it is generally recommended to obtain 50 to 100 years worth of rainfall data in order to predict energy output dependent on drought and flood conditions. In the case of El Cajón, about 11 years of rainfall data were collected as plans were made for construction (Jackson, 2005). Sedimentation was reviewed, but no studies were completed on present biodiversity, impacts on downstream water quality, and deforestation, which in turn affects sedimentation rates (Jackson, 2005). Negative impacts on people living in close proximity to the dam were noted, but their loss of subsistence agriculture was not (Jackson, 2005).

The cost effectiveness of the project was also in question by both Honduran engineers and World Bank officials, considering such a large sum of money needed to be borrowed, especially immense in relation to the Honduran economy (Jackson, 2005). American engineering and consulting firm EBASCO found the project to be less costly than alternatives, but the World

Bank's decision to build the dam with faulty and flawed reports "was made in the context of a growing fear of rising oil prices (which never materialized) and based on a study premised on those rising oil prices that failed to consider the risks if oil prices should fall" and an urgency to produce energy for domestic demand and exportation, especially through connecting Honduras to the grid with Nicaragua (Jackson, 2005, p 170). Therefore, alternatives were not studied and the World Bank moved forward in building El Cajón. Robert McNamara, World Bank president at the time, admitted to approving the project in this context in a 1980 report (Jackson, 2005). Jackson speculates:

> The decision amounted to the following: We are going to build El Cajón because our (optimistic? flawed?) studies show that it is the least-cost solution compared to hypothetical alternatives that have not been studied in much depth because we have mostly been focusing on El Cajón as the solution (2005, p 170).

Jackson's Globalizers and El Cajón

In *The Globalizers*, Jackson's main goal is to expose the failure of El Cajón as the interactions of global agents acting on the local level in Honduras. Jackson argues that individual development professionals within institutions carry out the development agenda in the interest of the donor country, not the developing country, and he shows how and why (Jackson, 2005). Jackson outlines 5 main propositions to guide his work:

1. "Global agendas tend to win out over local agendas most of the time.
2. Local agendas succeed only if they are capable of linking to the global agendas.
3. Honduran institutions (and Honduras as a whole) receive some benefits from participating in the globalization agenda.
4. The negative consequences or potential drawbacks of development projects are downplayed or ignored.
5. The greater benefits of the activities of the international development profession accrue to donor countries, and these benefits are also largely hidden." (Jackson, 2005, p 14-17).

In the case of El Cajón, Jackson's globalizers include institutions (the federal government of Honduras, ENEE, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank), the people (the experts in finance, planning, and engineering), the expats (the individuals from the donor country who gain through the experience, such as through dissertations, theses, reports, and articles), the locals (those employed by international organizations who support the agenda of the globalizers in their home country, such as bureaucrats and businessmen). These globalizers are based around the world as well as in Honduras in association with dam building; their interconnections are based on contracts, agreements, policies, and the goals of the development agenda. Jackson claims the purpose of the globalizers in Honduras is to undertake projects for infrastructure development, "fostering broad economic policies that promote macroeconomic stability, foreign investment, and export-oriented economic growth," agriculture and natural resources (e.g., logging, forestry, mining, wood, silver, gold, ore as major exports), economic growth in banking and finance, Honduran government reform, and poverty reduction and social development (Jackson, 2005, p 139).

The Globalizers of 1985

El Cajón is the largest development project in Honduras costing $800 million provided by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), though this cost eventually reached almost $1 billion with necessary repairs and accounted for 40% of Honduras' total foreign debt (Jackson, 2005). Despite the environmental and social costs associated with El Cajón, the World Bank in the 1970s and 80s sought out large-scale projects to modernize nations (Jackson, 2005).

In 1980, the World Bank loans were signed with ENEE as the borrower and the government of Honduras as the guaranteer. The loans from the Bank, IDB, and European governments were in turn used to buy the infrastructure and contracts for the construction of the dam, therefore, providing an even greater profit to the lenders (Jackson, 2005). Producing El Cajón doubled Honduras' foreign debt and took up 40% of the country's revenues from 1980-1985 (Jackson, 2005). Within a year of its construction, the project failed when the dam's wall cracked, and by 1994 a widespread energy crisis ensued in Honduras (Jackson, 2005). All the while, the Bank ignored civil protests against the project, shot down alternative projects, and overruled local economic interests. This failure illuminates the lack of transparency and proper planning for the project.

The Failure of Consent, Failure of Relocation

> In fact, it is the *lack* of social sustainability in the region *and in Honduran society as a whole* that led to the social, economic, and environmental disaster brought on by the dam. In the absence of institutional structures (organizations, decision-making processes, etc) conducive to social justice and equity, decisions were made that ignored sustainability concerns and ran roughshod on the subsistence rights of the majority (Loker, 2004, p 133).

The Struggle of Relocation

Jackson turns to anthropologist Loker who built an ethnographic account of the people living in El Mango, the town nearest to and most directly affected by El Cajón (Figure 4). A resettlement plan was created by a contracted company in 1980 and informed by a socioeconomic survey conducted by the Instituto Nacional Agraria (INA) for ENEE in 1978 and 1979 (Loker, 2004). The goal of the survey was to guide a resettlement plan and location that would create an opportunity for growth, development conscious of human-ecological dependencies, and improvement in the quality of life for those being relocated (Loker, 2004).

The reality for the people of El Mango was far from this vision. The location chosen for resettlement, Medio Aguán in northern Honduras, was the one described as least desirable in the survey (Loker, 2004). Essentially, ENEE was not prepared or willing to invest millions of dollars in a relocation to haciendas, and when community members realized this, they were not willing to move into the barracks at Medio Aguán (Loker, 2004). This location was characterized by poor soil, limited wood to build shacks, and malaria carrying mosquitoes that were not present in El Mango (Loker, 2004). Therefore, the majority of the community decided to wait in their homes until they were completely flooded and forced to flee (Loker, 2004). Those whose homes were totally destroyed by the flooding and filling of the reservoir received cash payments from ENEE (Loker, 2004). However, this could never replace their fertile agricultural lands and their ties to community and environment.

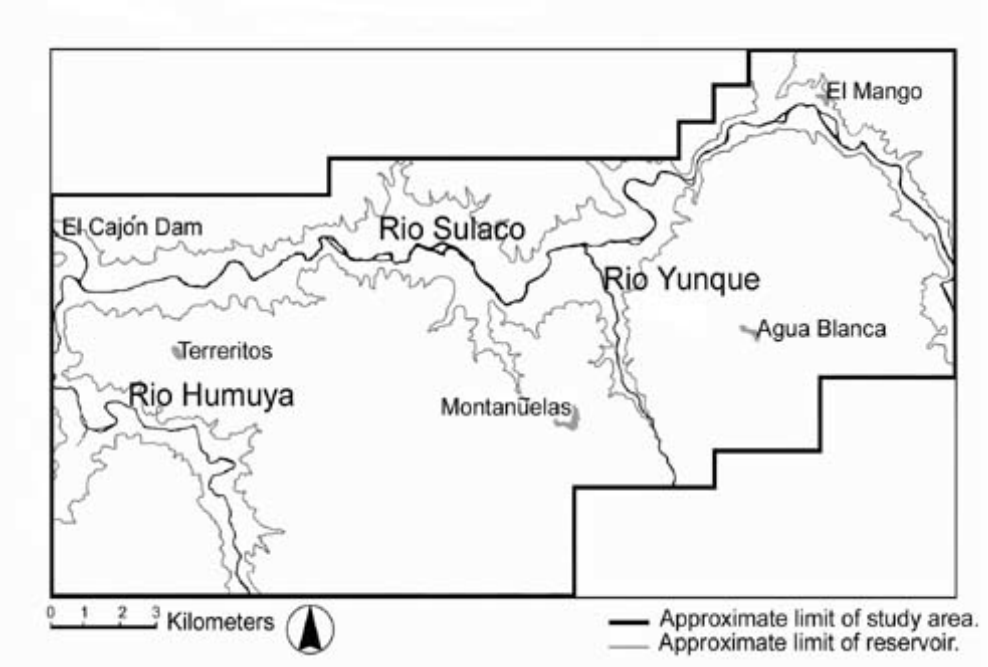

Figure 4: Map of the reservoir created by El Cajón and communities affected by flooding. Note: Medio Aguán is not included on this map because the relocation area is in northern, rather than western, Honduras (Loker, n.d.).

No formal evaluation of the relocation was carried out, but an ENEE feasibility study recorded 100 of the 600 families affected by the filling of El Cajon's reservoir left the area though only 47 were officially relocated by the government (Loker, 2004). The estimated cost, based on exchange rates at that time, was 25,000 lempiras (US $12,500) per family, but only 4,000 lempiras (US $2,000) were actually spent on relocating these 47 families. Because of this, life in Medio Aguán included: inadequate housing, lack of sanitation and potable water, land conflicts with residents, and forced formation of cooperatives and collective farm land (an alien system), so only 21 families remained in area by 1991 (Loker, 2004). $7.5 million was allocated for relocating all 600 families which amounted to less than 1% of the cost of the dam at $800 million, but only $1.75 million was used in this manner, meaning the remaining $5.75 million was unaccounted (Loker, 2004). The people of El Mango were left with deep disappointment in the government, profound distrust in ENEE, and disdain for top-down approaches (Loker, 2004). Essentially, the people felt powerless.

Lack of Consent and Social Capital

The huge problem associated with this relocation was the lack of accountability and responsibility the government enacted. Therefore, there was no free, prior, and informed consent of the dam-affected people, and they were not integrated into the political and socioeconomic processes of dam planning and construction. The people felt powerless and lacked a voice in this narrative as choices were made from the top without proper concern for those impacted on the ground.

Loker talks about the lack of social capital the people of El Mango had in mobilizing against the construction of El Cajon and the forced migration from their homes. Specifically, Loker notes there was a lot of local skepticism about the dam and there has been increased

mobilization since the dam was built, but there is a "'lack of social capital'—lack of experience, social barriers to participation, a history of frustration with external (state) authorities and unresponsive local (municipal) authorities—appropriate institutions have, quite simply, not emerged" (Loker, 2004, p 119).

Loker discusses two mechanisms in particular that were lacking for "successful collective action" (2004, p 119). The first of which is a history of experience with successful collective action. The second is the need for "a political entrepreneur" to mobilize people; this political entrepreneur is often an outsider or an institution that helps to "clarify agendas, articulate common problems and potential solutions, and break procedural impasses that often inhibit effective collective action" (Loker, 2004, p 119).

Although unfortunate El Mango residents did not have the social capital and mobilization to fight El Cajón, I confidently argue that Tawahka communities have these mechanisms as has been demonstrated during the Patuca II standoff. Before determining if the political climate on the ground in Honduras is right for constructing Patuca III and to, yet again, implement a successful indigenous movement against the Patuca Dams Project, let's look at the ways history can inform this present scenario.

Conclusions about History of Dams in Honduras

What we can learn from the proposals of Patuca II and El Cajón is that there is a highly relevant history of dam building in Honduras aside from the current Patuca III proposal. In the context of history, Patuca III is not a stand-alone project being proposed in a vacuum. In fact, even though the newspaper *El Tiempo* calls Patuca III the first step toward energy independence, it actually belongs to a network of dams including Patuca I and II as well as sites at Los Llanitos,

Jicotuyo, and Aguán ("Lobo inicia construcción," 2011 May 17). Historically speaking, large-scale hydropower dams have been offered as the solution for both an energy and identity crisis in Honduras: mega-dams are meant to produce high levels of electricity for domestic and regional consumption **and** to fulfill a lack of large, showy infrastructure projects in Honduras, one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yet it appears that dams have failed to meet both these criteria to date. Honduras' Human Development Index (HDI) at 0.625 ranked 121 out of 187 countries in 2011 (Honduras country profile, 2011).

The history I have included reviews that proposed dams *have* been built. The example of El Cajón shows that a dam will be built if the actors surrounding the dam create an ostensibly pro-dam climate that is not faced by resistance. The fact that an international agenda can dominate a very specific location in Honduras and win out over local concerns is extremely telling. In short, a dam will be built if the world wants it to be built. This same attitude of international and national actors forging ahead in dam building is also the same with the Patuca II projects. However, the Patuca Dams have never been built not simply because of environmental and social impacts associated with the project. Instead, the lack of environmental knowledge connected with other environmental risks (such as climatic variability in extreme droughts, floods, and hurricanes) and subsequent lack of secured funding **and** solidarity networks of resistance against the dams have slated the projects.

Lessons that can be drawn from these two examples, where in both cases there was relatively no data and no consultation with indigenous and local peoples, include:

- Solidarity can stop dams from being constructed—without a resistance movement, then there is no stopping a dam.
- Lack of data will not necessarily stop a project unless this means funding cannot be secured immediately or if climatic variability adds increased risk.

These preliminary conclusions about the history of dam building in Honduras can help us move forward in the analysis of Patuca III.

Chapter II. Methods

The data and research contained in this thesis project have been derived from a collaborative and participatory group effort. This collective endeavor has not only informed my conclusions, but has made it possible to effectively analyze the multiple issues facing Tawahka communities. I have relied on the social capital and resources of various groups, including Dr. Kendra McSweeney and graduate student Zoe Pearson of the Ohio State Geography Department, indigenous Tawahka leaders, Honduran NGO representatives, Honduran professors and government officials, Tawahka and Miskitu community members, and representatives from Northern NGOs International Rivers and Cultural Survival to form a complex web of local, national, and international agents involved in the various issues surrounding the Patuca Dams. I have also drawn on academic literature and popular media to inform frameworks and portray perspectives. My goal in drawing on multiple stakeholders and outlets for media has been to best preserve the narratives and voices of La Moskitia without homogenizing diverse ideas and viewpoints in order to arrive at a single conclusion.

I have divided the methods I have used in this research into three broad categories: pre-field work, in the field, and post-field work. It is useful to make these pragmatic divisions because they signify the three main parts of the research process and the rich, demanding journey I have taken in the past year.

Author travelling up the Patuca River via *pipante* (photo: Z. Pearson).

Pre-Field Work

The months preceding my experience in the field (March and April 2011), I immersed myself in available documents surrounding past proposals from 1998 and 2008 for the Patuca Dams, known as the Patuca II project. I was only able to do so because McSweeney collected and saved folders full of all of the documents she came into contact with surrounding the dam issue since the 1990s. I attribute these folders to introducing me to the problems associated with the dams, the campaigns against them, and the relevant actors involved, therefore, informing my preliminary research before departing for the field. Reading and analyzing these documents took considerable time and effort; they included scientific reports, personal email communication, and grassroots declarations written in Spanish.

One set of documents I drew upon most included Esselman's scientific reports from 2006 and 2010 about biodiversity and river flows for the Patuca River. At the time of writing, Peter C. Esselman was a PhD candidate and Aquatic Conservation Biologist at the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan. A scientific researcher, Esselman lent

his expertise to international NGO The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in order to make an argument for safe and responsible water management because at the time of the Patuca II proposal in 2008, the dams were believed to be built. Therefore, TNC, involved with concessions of other lands in La Moskitia, aimed to protect the watershed and surrounding ecosystems of the Patuca River through sound scientific policy and management.

Yet, as TNC "sold out" the Moskitia by preferring to be involved in developing plans, other international actors continued a resistance against the dam through education and dissemination of information about the devastation the dams would create. I pulled from email correspondence between McSweeney, International Rivers, and Harza engineering, the American dam builders of Patuca II. Harza circulated crude brochures about "El Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca II" to present to Tawahka community meetings how life would be better with the dams; the hydropower would provide rural electrification to Tawahka communities, thus making washing clothes with electrical washing machines possible (Figure 5) (McAdams et al., 1997). The opposition, on the other hand, found outlets through Honduran newspaper articles and grassroots statements against Patuca II, including la Declaración UHRI-BRUS, MOPAWI documents on Proyecto Hidroelétrico – Patuca II, Plataforma Critical Patuca II, and Declaración de Catacamas.

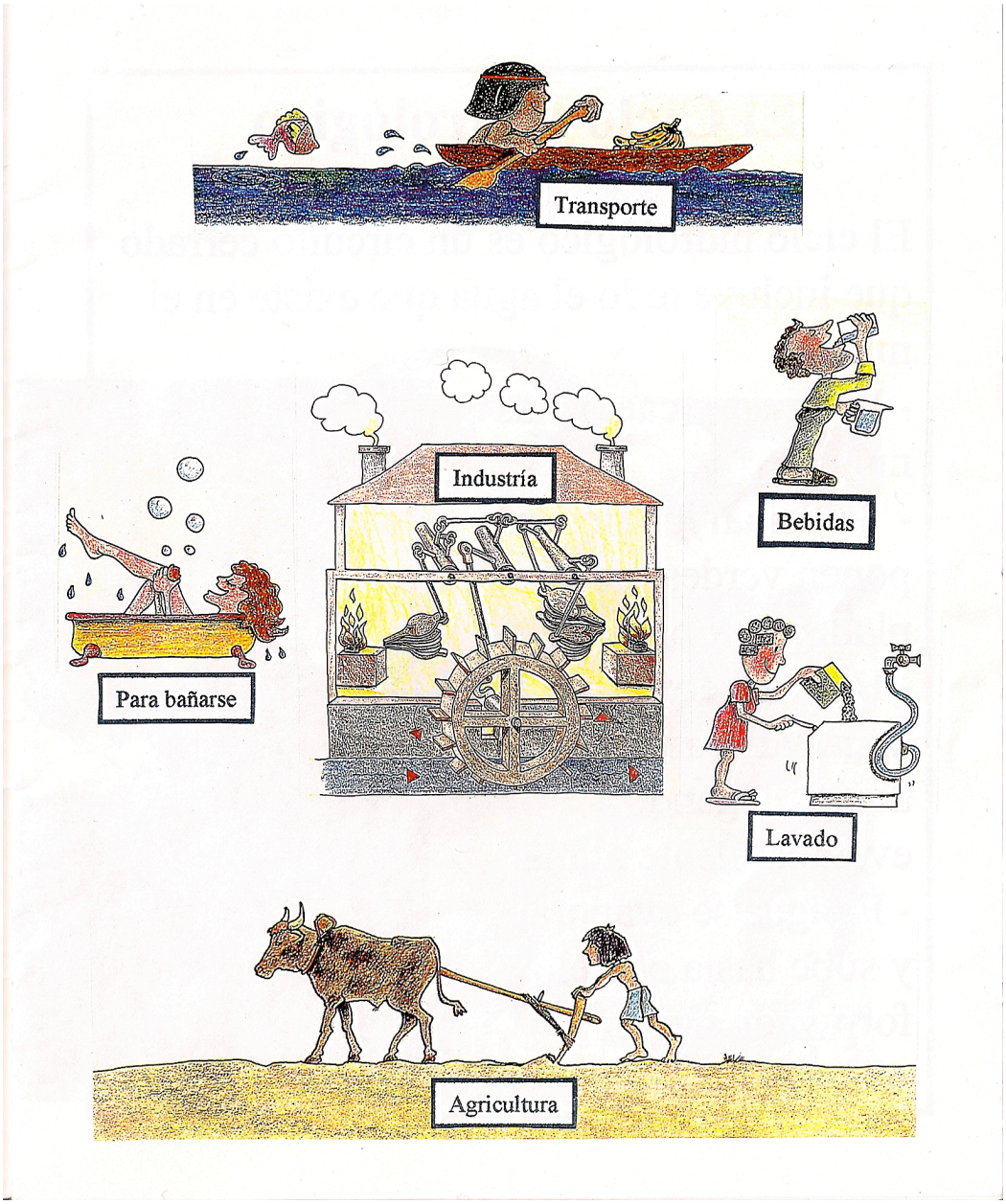

Figure 5: This image comes from a pamphlet about Patuca II created by Panda Energy International and Harza Engineering that was distributed to Tawahka communities. This page describes how "the life of man depends on water" with illustrations of the uses of water made possible through hydropower. (McAdams et al., 1997).

From these documents, I compiled a report on the Patuca dams so as to not enter the conversation in Honduras blindly. I also constructed a timeline of events related to the Patuca Dams over time (included in this thesis), a list of relevant people and their contact information, a list of related organizations and their missions, and a fast fact sheet about the most pertinent

information. These documents were completed before leaving the United States and were shared with McSweeney and Pearson and were eventually sent to contacts at International Rivers and Cultural Survival's Global Response Program.

At this time, my research questions did not focus on the Patuca dams in particular. Instead, I was more interested in looking at how the hardwood dugout canoe, or *pipante*, was of economic and cultural importance to the Tawahka. The proposed dams were merely an example of a hindrance to effective use of the *pipante*. The archived documents were meant to better inform our research group about what to ask about the dams and what has happened in the past. In the long run, these documents would help me find out if there were windows for opportunities to fight against the dams.

The Journey in the Field

Our Ohio State research team was on the ground in Honduras from May 7th through June 2nd 2011. A full five days were spent in the country's capital city, Tegucigalpa. Upon our arrival, an ominous and untimely death of a young Tawahka girl had occurred in Teguc, which set the tone for our research experience. After this blunt introduction to the troubles that face Tawahka communities, we got our feet wet so to speak in the current issues and activities going on in Tegucigalpa, where a group of Tawahka activists and unofficial political representatives in the grassroots NGO Alianza Verde are located. Our main contact in this group is the political activist leader Edgardo Benítez, whom we interviewed in order to be brought up to date. This interview was voice and camera recorded and included maps and organizational timelines to better inform us. During this time, we also interviewed Adalberto Padilla, an employee of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in Honduras, who succinctly outlined the plans for

Patuca III and the roles of the World Bank and Inter American Development Bank in this process. McSweeney primarily led these interviews.

We generally interacted with Tawahka living in Tegucigalpa, talking and sharing meals. Alianza Verde, our home base, is itself located in an old house in the city creating a place for migrant Tawahka to gather. In this home-office, we prepared and tested the household surveys and generated lists of all Tawahka families based in both Tegucigalpa and the remote communities. Importantly, we met and began forming our research team that would travel together to the Tawahka Asangni Biosphere Reserve. Beyond Benítez, we would be working with Celio, a Tawahka native to La Moskitia, and three university students (Gabby, Kathy, Merilu) who would also play integral roles in the research. These students led Pearson and I throughout the city to run errands to prepare for the trip, including a visit to the Geography Institute in order to acquire maps of La Moskitia and government-held plans for the dams.

On our last day in the capital, we formed a group consisting of myself, Zoe, Lucio (a Tawahka elder), Celio, Kathy, and our driver to take a 5 hour drive to Piedras Amarillas, the proposed site for Patuca III, on the Patuca River. We arrived at Nueva Palestina, the nearest town to Piedras Amarillas, and spoke with local residents about the dams, and we also interviewed a professor of agriculture, who strongly opposed construction, and who asked to remain anonymous. At Piedras Amarillas we captured photos and videos of Lucio and Celio testifying along the banks of the Patuca of the devastation the dam would cause for downstream Tawahka and Miskitu families. Early the following morning, our group of about 20 people, including those listed above plus biologist and novelist Juan Pablo, additional students, and Tawahka, departed on three pick up trucks from Tegucigalpa for the RBTA. Our route was unusual because we had

to travel via the Caribbean coast to the Patuca River since the river was too shallow to travel downstream.

We spent a night along the Caribbean coast and two nights in the town of Brus Laguna, a town situated in northeast Honduras near the mouth of the Patuca River, where we stayed with Benítez's family. Here, we also conducted important interviews with Miskitu teachers and community leaders DelBer and Kinke Wood. We also purchased all of the necessary foodstuffs and supplies for our stay in the Tawahka town of Krausirpi and visits to the other Tawahka communities. In this area, we also photographed enormous oil palm plantations owned by some of Honduras' wealthiest families, some of whom are associated with narco-trafficking in Honduras. From here on out, we travelled via motorized dugout canoe through the lagoons, channels, and finally up the Patuca River.

Main road in Brus Laguna (photo: S. Santiago).

On May 18th, we arrived in Krausirpi, the unofficial Tawahka capital, where we lived for exactly one week. During this week, we hosted community meetings, led by McSweeney and

Benítez, so that Tawahka could discuss social issues, including land grabs by non-indigenous colonizers, maternal and child health concerns, and the impending dams. We immediately began completing over 100 household surveys that asked questions about family health, birth and death rates, agricultural lands, harvests and yields, and ownership of various items including radios, *pipantes*, and machetes to give an overall idea about changing demographics, wealth, and livelihoods. To complete the surveys, we broke into smaller groups, and I often accompanied McSweeney or Pearson. I also accompanied McSweeney to speak with the local teacher, doctor, and the oldest living Tawahka woman. These conversations helped us to better understand the current political, social, and environmental climate faced by the Tawahka communities.

Community meeting led by McSweeney (photo: S. Santiago).

We travelled from Krausirpi to three other Tawahka communities on May 21st to complete household surveys and hold community meetings in classrooms. On May 23rd, Pearson and I hiked with Celio, Lucio, Juan Pablo, and students to Krautara, the closest Tawahka village

to Krausirpi, to conduct household surveys and meetings. Along our way, we witnessed deforestation for agriculture. We spent our last evening in Krausirpi interviewing Doña Francelia, a local matriarch, on her perspectives about the importance of the Patuca River and Lorenzo Tinglas, brother of Benítez, who is a regional indigenous leader in staunch opposition to the proposed damming.

McSweeney completing a household survey with a Tawahka family. (photo: S. Santiago)

At the close of the village-based research, we travelled upstream for two days via *pipante* until we were again near Nueva Palestina. We travelled by truck back to Piedras Amarillas where ground had been broken by President Lobo on May 16th for Patuca III. Since the two weeks when we had last been at the dam site, roads and bridges were being constructed to transport equipment and build barracks, and a huge sign was erected at the site with plans for Patuca III. A new sense of urgency arose as we made our way back to the capital. We spent several more days in Tegucigalpa interviewing more government officials and collecting various newspapers from the month in which we had been in Honduras. We began transcribing interviews and organizing photos and videos before returning to the United States.

Through household surveys, interviews, and conversations, we were able to develop a holistic picture of what is happening on the ground in Honduras and the TABR. The household surveys were bound in large notebooks with specific questions, though they were carried out as conversations as best as possible with individual heads of households, often the oldest male. In terms of community meetings, they were led by McSweeney, Benítez, and/or Juan Pablo but were open and democratic platforms for community members to speak. The individual interviews were meant to allow community members to freely speak their opinions and concerns as well, with some specific questions to encourage the narration and conversation.

I was often responsible for photographing and recording, by video and tape recorder, all events and conversations. We have a collection of thousands of photos and tens of recordings as testimonies of our research trip. These files have been invaluable in placing faces with the movement against the dam and to bring the narratives to life. The newspaper articles have also informed public opinion about the dams and have captured popular events, such as laying the first stone at the Patuca III site, which we did not witness firsthand.

Additionally, living within Tawahka communities and asking for the opinions of various people allowed me to understand the Tawahka way of life and how threatened it is. To a certain degree, our group felt the pressures of securing clean drinking water, the expense and challenge of travelling via motorized dugout canoe along the river, protecting oneself from disease and malaria carrying mosquitoes, and the limitations of the local diet dependent on subsistence harvests. Without this personal experience and traversing the length of the Patuca River, it would be nearly impossible to imagine and grasp (at least to a certain extent) the imminent threats to Tawahka livelihoods and survival, much less imagine mega-dams on the Patuca.

Post-Field Work

The several months following the fieldwork consisted of systematic organization of data. Interviews were translated and transcribed by various members of the research team. Pearson took charge of reading newspaper articles that pertained to the 2009 government coup, Patuca III, narcotrafficking, and conservation and outlined each relevant article. I organized all photos and videos so that they would be ready for use.

At this point, I began an intensive literature review on the topics that follows in the thesis. The literature review was not restricted to just academic articles, but included newspaper and magazine articles, blogs, NGO reports, and Google alerts to create an expansive view. However, the bulk of the research remains in the primary data found in our collected interviews, conversations, images, and Honduran newspaper articles.

In December 2011, I collected a final set of data. Two NGOs worked jointly with academics, including McSweeney, on campaigns against Patuca II in 1998 and 2008, and were currently launching an anti-dam campaign in light of Patuca III. Therefore, I decided to meet with representatives from these two organizations, Cultural Survival's Global Response program in Boulder, Colorado and International Rivers in Berkeley, California. Not only could I gain from their experiences and opinions but could explore the inner workings of international NGOs and how they plug into grassroots campaigns abroad. For representatives from both organizations, I created semi-structured questions for the interviews.

I spent the day with Paula Palmer, Director of Global Response, to study Cultural Survival's role in past and present Patuca campaigns, their relationship with indigenous leaders in Honduras, and how I could personally contribute to the anti-dam campaign through letter-writing and fundraising. During this visit, I worked with an intern and an employee in Guatemala

over a Skype conference call to formulate a letter-writing and social media campaign against the dams. I have continued contact with phone calls and emails to continue this effort.

In Berkeley, I had a very constructive and insightful interview with Monti Aguirre, IR's Latin American Program Coordinator, about neoliberal and capital-driven motives for proposing the Patuca Dams and the role of IR in anti-dam campaigns worldwide. Aguirre provided reports and printed materials to further inform my research. I also met briefly with Grace Mang, IR's China Program Director, to gain more insight into the role of Chinese dam builder Sinohydro and financier Export Import Bank in moving forward with the dams.

The interviewees did not find reason to be recorded, so I took extensive notes and transcribed the interviews afterward. Contact has been maintained in order to inform my research and to contribute to the campaign against the dams.

Through all of the explained methods, I have collected and organized data for almost a year to best inform this research on multiple scales, maintain truthful narratives surrounding various issues affecting Tawahka populations, and place faces with the research process and conclusions to my research questions.

Additional Methods for Further Research:

I would like to mention a few other methods of exploration that were not fully achieved in this research. For one, it would have been very informative to visit El Cajón in person, which had been an objective of the trip but time did not permit. We could not only have gained a visual of the immense project proposed for the Patuca but also engaged in conversation with local people. Additionally, we were not successful in meeting with anyone from ENEE or the US Embassy for additional perspectives to inform our multi-vocal narrative surrounding Patuca III.

Chapter III. The Patuca's Dam History

As discussed in the methods section, the first segment of my research included immersion in documents and grey literature (dam reports, proposals, and critiques) associated with Patuca II. I have included all of my findings for Patuca II as well as recent events regarding Patuca III in a timeline, which is included in this section. This timeline is important in showing the history of the sequence of the Patuca Dam Project and the flux in successes and hindrances in making such projects a reality (or not). Events particularly related to dam advancement are in red and to resistance are in blue with especially relevant events in bold. Note the flows between the two.

Timeline of Events Relative to Patuca III

1960: Since 1960, Harza has been involved in hydropower projects in Honduras, including Cañaveral, Río Lindo, and El Níspero.

1970: **Panda began locating sites for future hydropower projects, including 4 on the Patuca.**

1989: 40 armed colonists claimed a large track of Tawahka subsistence lands, but retreated with military threat by the Instituto Nacional Agraria (INA).

1992: President Callejas recognized the RBTA through presidential accords.

1993, November: President Callejas of Honduras signed a presidential accord to protect the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor in Honduras.

1994: President Reina recognized the RBTA through presidential accords.

1994: **Honduras suffered an electricity shortage due to a drought, so Honduras' National Congress issued Decreto No. 158-94, revising the Energy Law (Ley Marco del Subsector Eléctrico), to allow the government to resort to the private sector for the development and operation of electrical plants and established an Energy Cabinet.**

1995: Beginning of a 5-year period of World Bank funding to the Secretariat of the Environment (SEDA) of a total of $10.8 million to strengthen SEDA, perform environmental impact assessments (EIAs), and develop local environmental management

1996, September 17: **Harza signed a letter of understanding with ENEE, granting the rights to develop the Patuca II site.**

- initial plans: begin construction in 1999; operation in 2003
- took away SEDA's role in hydropower planning

1996, December: All Central American nations signed a treaty allowing for privatization of electricity production.

1997, October: The World Bank committed $7 million in a Trust Fund Grant to Honduras to protect the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.

1997, October: **Began environmental impact assessment for Patuca II, required by Honduras and international financiers Corporación Internacional Financiera (IFC) and Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (IBD)**

1997: **US Texan company Panda tried to begin dam construction, but denounced by campesinos for lack of consultation**

1997, August 1-4: Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca II: La Maravillosa Fuerza Energética Del Agua, Presentación a la Comunidad Tawahka por Panda Energy International Inc. y Harza Engineering Company International LP (see Figure 5).

1998, March 21: President Reina of Honduras committed Honduras to aggressive watershed development projects

1998, May 14-15: "Importance of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Threats it Faces"/"Importancia del Corredor Biológico Mesoamericano y las Amenazas que Enfrenta" workshop held for the Honduran people to express their position (Declaración de Catacamas)

1998, March 27: Honduran Government passed incentive laws for renewable energy developers, granting them 15 year sales tax holiday and a 10 year holiday for taxes on profit. This incentive would prompt the signing of a power sales contract (PPA) between Harza and Panda and ENEE upon completion of the feasibility study in 1997.

1998, May 1: **Elvis Santos, Ministro de Recursos Naturales, announced Secretaría de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente (SERNA)'s support for PDP, although Panda Patuca Power Company (PPPC)'s EIA was not expected to be complete until January 1999.**

1998, May 24: **Indigenous communities signed the Ahuas Declaration demanding public transparency of the Honduran Government, denouncing false participatory processes used by PPPC, and calling upon the World Bank to investigate impacts of PDP before providing funding.**

1998, June 9: Coordinadora Nacional Ambientalista (CNA): Foro Patuca II

- presentations on problems with rivers and water worldwide

- forum held by Panda: included Patuca II project director Robert U. Murdock, local manager of Patuca II, others from PPPC, and representatives from Tawahka and Miskitu Communities

1998, July: Construction companies plan to lay roads from Rancho Escondido to the Patuca River. Drilling at the proposed dam site scheduled to begin.

1998, August: Panda Energy International transferred power plant development to Panda Global Holdings, Inc. (change in finance: use hedge funds and high yield junk bonds to possibly funnel revenues to other projects)

1998: **Plataforma para la Defensa del Rio Patuca (PDRP) founded in Ahuas.**

1998, September 4: **Indigenous groups held a press conference to publicly denounce plans for PDP.**

1998, October 14: **Indigenous coalition met with Honduran Congressional Ethnic Committee, securing support of 8 Honduran congressmen attending the presentation to oppose the Patuca Dam Project.**

1998, October 25: **Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras, changing river flows of the Patuca and damaging kilometers of electricity transmission lines affecting 90% of the population, taking 4 weeks to begin repairs.**

1998, December: ENEE claimed electricity demand was back to pre-hurricane levels.

1999: **Harza cancelled work on impact analysis EIAs conducted by the Western Oilfield Environmental Services, which was considered to be a stop to Patuca II. May have been to lessen the indigenous opposition or to earn an extension since the paperwork was not complete, shelving the project for a limited time.**

1999, February 14-19: Tawahka invited to Reunion del Grupo de Trabajo Intersesional sobre el Foro Permanente in Geneva.

1999, September 20-27: Asang Launa, Miskitu, and Tawahka groups asked to speak at an event in Italy about Patuca II and problems with dams in Honduras in the wake of Hurricane Mitch (invitation from Jaroslava Colajacomo of VOICE).

1999: **Harza Engineering dropped Patuca II project because of "lack of popular support" according to a letter from PR for Private Investment at Harza.**

1999, 15 December: Campaña Solidaridad Moskitia 2000 aimed to collect $150,000 USD for indigenous self-determination.

2000, November: World Commission on Dams reported on its 2 ½ year study into dams and development, as the first independent global study of the performance of world's largest dams.

Research includes flooding in Nigeria, West Bengal in India, Honduras, Southern Africa, and Mekong of Southeast Asia.

2006, August: Esselman's research team's first trip to Patuca during high flows (questionnaires for TEK information)

2006, October: President Zelaya returned from a trip to Taiwan with $250 million in financing for Patuca III.

2006, October: **ENEE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Taipower to design and construct Patuca III, with engineering firm Sinotech.**

- Proposed Completion Stages of PDP: 2003: first phase; 2006: second phase; 2008-2009: functioning in totality at capacity of 700 MW

2006, November: Environmental Flow Workshop held by ENEE in Tegucigalpa, indigenous representative NOT invited.

2006: **ENEE entered an MOU with TNC to create environmental flow recommendations for the design of Patuca III**

2006, December 4: **SERNA notified the Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña (OFRANEH) that no environmental permit was issued for construction of Patuca III although infrastructure planning was underway.**

2006, December 20: Persecution of Father Tamayo and murder of Heraldo Zuñiga and Roger Ivan Cartagena of Olancho Environmentalist Movement by the State of Honduras.

2006, December: Esselman's Savannah Process—included international experts and local scientists, professionals, and those with traditional knowledge to create an assessment, including representatives from TNC, ENEE, other agencies, and NGOs.

2007, May: Esselman's second trip to Patuca during low flows (more interviews to confirm information of first trip and to gather information on flow levels impact on village life).

2007, August: Esselman's second environmental flow assessment workshop with Tawahka, Miskito, and Mestizo representatives.

2007, ~October: Murder of Mario Guifarro in Parawasito (Municipality of Dulce Nombre de Culmí) in the middle Patuca while working on the ICADE project under the mandate of FITH.

2007, October: By this time, there had been 12 assassinations over the past year because of land rights conflicts.

2007, October 22-25: Celebration of the III Encuentro de Comunidades Indigenas del Rio Patuca en Ahuas, with the people expecting war.

2007, December 1-3: IV Encuentro en Ahuas to bring together indigenous peoples, NGOs, federations, etc. to come to a resolution.

2008, February 22-24: Preparation of "El Foro Regional de Debate sobre el Patuca III."

2008, March: "El Foro Nacional" convened in Tegucigalpa.

2008, March 9: **Presentation of La Plataforma para La Defensa del Río Patuca: Declaración de UHRI-Brus at Brus Laguna.**

2009, May: **Taiwan rescinded funding for Patuca III.**

2009: **End of Zelaya's administration: US Harza Company withdrew, Taiwan Power declined contract and cancelled plans to invest $300 million.**

- Hurricane Mitch prompted Harza Company to withdraw because of fragile state of river.
- Taiwan said to withdraw because of financial crisis but also because of recognition of problems with Patuca's shores and production capacity of river was half of the predicted 100 MW capacity; Chinese know not feasible but competing with Taiwan.

2009, June: **Military Coup d'État**

- Previous to coup, Zelaya administration withdrew plans for Patuca dams. Dams back on table with post-coup Lobo administration.

2009, September: **Chinese Vice president Son Dong Sheng said the Patuca dams project would require an investment of $1,000 million; Inter-American Development Bank committed $1,200 million.**

2010, September 8: **The People's Republic of China and Honduras signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build Patuca I, II, III, with plans to begin construction of the first half in 2011.**

2010, Fall: **Honduran government announced China would finance Patuca III as well as Patuca I and II lower on the river; Chinese state-owned Sinohydro working with government of Honduras to complete feasibility studies; financing through EXIM Bank.**

2011, January 17: **Honduran National Congress approved legislation for the construction of Patuca II ("Valencia"), Patuca IIA ("Tarrosa"), and Patuca III ("Piedras Amarillas") in Olancho (and Los Llanitos and Jicatuyo plants in Santa Bárbara).**

- Within 3 years, Patuca III will generate 104 MW of power
- Chinese cut down construction time from 5 to 3 years

2011, February 1: Construction of first phase of Patuca III said to have begun.

2011, February 2: **Olancho protests against Patuca III at the Presidential House in Tegucigalpa, met with repression from police.**

2011, February 15: **Representatives of the Miskitu, Pech, Tawahka, and Garifuna created the Unity of Indigenous and Black Peoples of the Honduran Moskitia to condemn the construction of Patuca I, II, III because the government lacked consent of the people.**

2011, 28 March: China EXIM Bank and Inter-American Development Bank signed two agreements for financing development projects in Latin America. The first was a letter of intent to create an infrastructure investment mechanism for funding projects in BID borrowing member countries and the second was a Memorandum of Understanding that would support projects in infrastructure, energy, and natural resources.

2011, late March: **Miskitu and Tawahka demonstrators protested the US Military Base in Katsky (Karataska) and Patuca III at the airports at Puerto Lempira and Wampusirpi; President Porfirio Lobo and Ambassador Hugo Llorens came to the site.**

2011, 16 May: **The first stone was placed at the Patuca III Piedras Amarillas site.** Those present included: President Lobo, head of the National Congress, Juan Orlando Hernandez, and the head of ENEE, Roberto Martinez Lozano.

2011, September: Indigenous protest in Tegucigalpa against Patuca III, asking to open up a dialogue with the government.

2014, January: By this time, Patuca III is planned to begin generating power.

2020: Within 9 years, Patuca I, II, III is planned to be complete with a capacity of 524 MW.

Chapter IV. What We Know, Don't Know About Patuca III

What We Know About the Patuca Dams Sites

The current project, proposed and funded by China, includes three separate mega-dams and is therefore called Patuca III, differentiating this proposal from those of the past. Important to note, the information we do know about the Patuca III project is based on the information released by ENEE to the press. The single Patuca III dam is estimated to cost $350 million, will be constructed in an area of 72 square km, and will stand 55 m high and 208 m wide ("Temor en vecinos," 2011 May 9). It is believed that it will take 3 years to build Patuca III with construction ending in October 2013 and production commencing in January 2014 ("Temor en vecinos," 2011 May 9; " Lobo inicia construcción," 2011 May 17; "Arranca constucción," 2011 May 17). The three dams are said to have a potential energy production of 524 megawatts total, with 270 MW from Patuca I, 150 MW from Patuca II, and 104 MW from Patuca III, with total average energy production estimated at 326 GWH (note this source does not refer to the dams as Patuca II, Patuca IIa, and Patuca III) ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrio Patuca III," 2011 May 10). Regarding their distance, Patuca I and Patuca II will be located 90 km and 60 km, respectively, below Patuca III ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrio Patuca III," 2011 May 10). Total investment in the project will be $1200 million ("Catacamas solicitará," 2011 May 10; "Proyecto Hidroeléctrio Patuca III," 2011 May 10).

Image of Patuca III dam simulation ("Catacamas solicitará," 2011 May 10).

In terms of employment, an estimated 2,750 people will construct the dam, 2,000 of whom will be from Honduras and 750 from mainland China ("Temor en vecinos," 2011 May 9), though the next day *El Heraldo* identified these workers as Taiwanese ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrio Patuca III," 2011 May 10). Further, the Patuca III site will be occupied by 200 soldiers who will provide security ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca III," 2011 May 10). Chinese dam builder Sinohydro, referred to as China Continental in *La Tribuna's* May 9th article "Catacamas solicitará," has chosen a location to build an encampment of barracks for its employees 6 km from Patuca III ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca III," 2011 May 10). The first stone was placed at the Patuca III site of Piedras Amarillas on May 16, 2011 ("Hoy colocan," 2011 May 16).

What is the alleged purpose of these dams?

As the cultural, environmental, and political landscapes change, an underlying plan for regional integration in Central America pulls together the preparations to build the Patuca Dams and the urgency for Honduras to make itself a competitive nation through production of hydropower. In Tawahka communities, this integration plan did not surface in conversation, but since returning from the field, conversations with representatives from International Rivers and Cultural Survival have offered the idea of regional integration as the main force pushing the PDP. Miriam Miranda, leader of the Garifuna organization OFRANEH, wrote in a popular article in the context of the 2008 Patuca II proposal:

> For more than ten years, there has been talk of plans to build a series of dams on the Patuca River. As well, Plan Puebla Panama is advocating the construction of an unknown number of dams, which will supply energy to our "neighbor" to the North through the Mesoamerican Energy Interconnection Initiative (SIEPAC) (Miranda, 2007 January 23).

Plan Puebla Panama

Specifically, the Plan Puebla Panama (PPP) is "a $10 billion, 10- to 25-year regional integration megaproject proposed by Mexican president Vicente Fox in 2001 and sponsored (via loans) by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, and the World Bank" (Tebtebba Foundation et al., p 164). This regional integration plan stretches from Mexico's southern state of Puebla down to Panama, including 9 southern Mexican states and the 7 Central American countries, "and would open a region inhabited by nine million indigenous people to uncontrolled private foreign intervention and development" (Tebtebba Foundation et al., p 164). The PPP ambitiously calls for industrialization of Central American agriculture, energy, and transportation through hydroelectric dams, oil and gas pipelines, canals, connection of the energy grid, *maquiladora*

zones, superhighways, and high-speed rails that aim to serve "foreign investors at the expense of local communities, as corporations tap into the area's abundant resources and biodiversity, take advantage of cheap labor, and displace indigenous and rural communities in the way of project dams, industrial farms, ranching, logging, mining, oil and bioprospecting" (Tebtebba Foundation et al., p 164-5).

Wendy Call, a self-described freelance writer who contributes her research on Mexico and the PPP to NACLA, describes the "Trans-Isthmus Project" as having three main goals:

> "(1) increase the transit and industrial infrastructure of the region, improving the capacity for export industries, (2) catalyze a shift of the region's economy from agriculture to assembly plant maquiladoras and manufacturing, and (3) expand private control over the vast natural resources of the region" (Call, 2002, p 24).

The Plan Puebla Panama and Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) have gone hand-in-hand to integrate Central America into the global economy (Spalding, 2008). These free-trade proposals have not been unmet by resistance in Mexico and Central America, where the Foro Mesoamericano was born to move toward an international *altermundista*, or another world (Spalding, 2008). President Vicente Fox proposed the Plan in 2001, but within a year and a half it was deemed dead by some and paralyzed by others as a surge of grassroots activism and the economic downturn associated with September 11th forced him to backpedal (Pickard, 2004).

Deep concerns about the environment and land rights, especially from indigenous people, spurred international networking of activists and direct actions, such as blocking off the Pan-American Highway (Spalding, 2008). The movement questioned development as "development for whom, with whose money, to benefit whom, and with decisions taken by whom" (Pickard, 2004, p 2). "The central goal of the Foro was 'to strengthen the resistance processes for the Mesoamerican peoples of an anticapitalist, antipatriarchal and multicultural character' (Foro Mesoamericano, 2004c)" (Spalding, 2008, p 331).

Yet, neoliberal regionalism has still advanced. The PPP was not in and of itself a new agenda for Central America, but as Pickard describes it a "'conceptual project' that brings together several large projects that have been ongoing, or in the pipeline, for years" (2004, p 1). As the popularity for this "conceptual umbrella" has waned, the projects originally under the name of PPP are now being implemented independent of Fox's crippled plan, as speculated by Aguirre and Palmer of International Rivers and Cultural Survival, respectively, who have spoken with Norvin Goff, President of Miskitu Asla Takanka (MASTA), the United Mosquitia Organization of Honduras that contains 7 indigenous federations, on the subject.

Additionally, the most controversial projects were classified as "secondary projects", with the most notorious example including dam building; the PPP has officially denied having anything to do with dams. The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, an area La Moskitia is situated in, has also been separated from the PPP (Pickard, 2004). To Aguirre, the process of constructing the Patuca Dams parallels that of official PPP projects: the terrain is being prepared, FDI is being secured (from IDB and BCI), and civil society has little access to information. Therefore, it is difficult for civil society to track money and apply pressure to Sinohydro and EXIM for safeguards (personal communication, 12/13/11).

SIEPAC

Specifically, Honduras fits into the greater plan of Plan Puebla through the Plan's sub-project, known as the Central American Electrical Interconnection System, or SIEPAC (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010). According to a report on the Potential of Regional Power Integration by Economic Consulting Associates: "The project has also received high-level political support through the Plan Puebla-Panama, renamed the Mesoamerican Project, which is

a broader regional integration initiative" (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010, p 4). The purpose of SIEPAC is to reach economies of scale in hydropower electricity production through two interdependent projects: 1) development of regional electricity market, and 2) development and completion of 1,800 km international electricity transmission line from Mexico to Colombia (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010).

Guatemala and Panama are leaders in energy export, whereas Nicaragua and Honduras lag behind with dependence on thermal energy, instead of hydropower, that makes up more than half of the installed energy capacity (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010). Further, transmission and distribution losses are very high in these two states (27% in Nicaragua and 21% in Honduras) (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010). Honduras and Costa Rica have also lagged behind in reforming their generation, transmission, and distribution sectors, because their utilities are vertically integrated and competition is limited to contracts to a single buyer, compared to other Central American nations that have private investment from energy MNCs from the US and EU (Economic Consulting Associates, 2010, p 6-7).

Thus, Honduras' progress in infrastructure and energy development is slow so the nation is welcoming China's proposal and funding for the Patuca III project. As Jeremy Martin, Energy Program Director of UC San Diego's Institute of Americas concludes, SIEPAC can meet Honduras' (and Central American nations') energy needs and diminish the need to import energy (2010). This can be achieved through water resources since only 17% of hydropower has been tapped into from a total of 22,000 MW of potential hydroelectricity (Martin, 2010). Martin quotes that the neoliberal solution for slow energy and economic progress is: "Or, as one expert noted: Integration in Central America means one market = one problem = one solution" (Martin, 2010, p 10).

Patuca Dams and PPP

According to IR's Aguirre, the Patuca Dams are part of Plan Puebla Panama, or Project Mesoamerica, a project meant to connect the grid between the US and Panama with Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) funding to incentivize funding for energy development (personal communication, 12/13/11). She elaborated that through the PPP, there has been a move for privatization within states (communications, highways, infrastructure, etc.) and that this plan has also called for a restructuring of national energy agencies. She described energy agencies working with funding from the IMF, World Bank, and BID as key for the climate we have today for dam building in Central America (personal communication, 12/13/11).

What We Don't Know: Like El Cajón, Lack of Data

But can these goals of regional integration and Honduran economic and energy development be achieved? Are they feasible? And if so, why were they not achieved through Honduras' single greatest infrastructure project, El Cajón? Like El Cajón, there's an enormous lack of data about the Patuca River ecosystems and lack of consultation with indigenous peoples. As far as our research team could ascertain, the Patuca River is understudied and an official inventory of species and river flow data does not exist. For instance, we were told while motoring down the Patuca that ENEE has been responsible for regular collection of data on the river's level and rainfall, but our companions assured us the data are highly incomplete. They pointed to the ENEE posts along the Patuca where an employee is supposed to take records, but more often than not the logs are forged. In terms of building the dams, the devastating 1998

Hurricane Mitch, that rose the river's levels by 15-25 m (McSweeney & Coomes, 2011, p. 5203), will be used as the 100-year's flood threshold, despite a lack of annual rainfall data.

ENEE outpost box and wire over the Patuca River (photo: S. Santiago).

Data that are readily available come from scientific reports from Esselman of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University and Opperman, who was directly employed by The Nature Conservancy, who at the time worked with The Nature Conservancy during the Patuca II proposals. Esselman, who helped assess the feasibility of the Patuca II dam proposed in 2008, conducted research highly focused on environmental repercussions of dam construction, especially on fish populations and river habitats. According to Esselman and Opperman's 2010 research, bank habitats will be directly affected by fluctuations in water levels, disrupting nesting grounds of turtles, iguana, and fish, which are consumed by indigenous people. Rather than the dam controlling large floods, floods could damage agricultural floodplains since engineers did not create management plans for large

floods. They claim the dams may have positive impacts on river transportation because they would create higher flows during the dry-season permitting canoe navigation; however, this is all highly dependent upon proper management of flows (Esselman & Opperman, 2010). In regards to fish, their reproduction and migration are closely related to river flows influenced by deforestation, Hurricane Mitch, and sedimentation (Esselman, 2006). The dams could create a barrier to fish migration creating a smaller breeding pool, holding up sediment in the reservoir, and ultimately changing water quality and temperature of the microclimate. Deforestation brought on by construction and heavy metal pollution caused by agri-business and mining would promote malaria, dengue, and parasitic and mental disorders from contaminated water (Almendares, 2007).

Next Steps: Environmental and Social Impact Assessments

From a rational point of view, it is difficult to imagine continued engineering planning and finance-securing for a project that has very limited background data and research. By law, environmental and social impact assessments are necessary to forge ahead, with or without enough collected data to best inform the assessments. This has been an especially controversial and cloudy portion of the process for the Patuca Dams. During my December visit to International Rivers' office, Aguirre said IR helped to set up a meeting with IDB and were helping to prepare a letter to IDB to request more information about loans and the impact assessments. Aguirre said IDB provided a loan so that the environmental impact assessment could be carried out by a Swedish contractor.

The impact study on file was completed by ENEE in 2006 and 2007 and was very deficient in information. In 1998-99 (or 1997-98, depending on the source), ENEE created assessments, which Aguirre believed were re-used for the Patuca II proposal in 2008. Currently, these are the only studies being applied to Patuca II, IIa, and III at Piedras Amarillas (personal communication 12/13/2011). The letter to IDB asked whether or not the bank is coming forward with finance or transmission lines for the project. In response, the IDB confirmed that it issued a social impact assessment and contracted out for recommendations and mitigation strategies, claiming the IDB will not fund a project without proper assessments. And when speaking with McSweeney in early 2012, an IDB official, who preferred to remain unidentified, claimed the bank is not involved, showing contradictions in IDB's involvement. It is suspicious IDB gave the loan for the assessment since that would signify the bank will be involved in finance for construction.

The Road Ahead

Previous Patuca II plans did not work out because the project was not deemed feasible in the wake of Hurricane Mitch, geopolitical tensions (suspected between China and Taiwan), lack of secured funding, and lack of knowledge on a sediment-heavy river in a tropical biome. So what is moving this project forward? We saw in El Cajón a lack of information and data and consultation and relocation. Don't we know that this is a flawed and failed process? On the ground, we witnessed the unfolding of a media campaign in favor of the dams. This demonstrated that the dam sites are being prepped for construction like El Cajón was without the appropriate data and applied research, suggesting the damming of the Patuca will lead to the destruction of a highly entwined social and environmental landscape. Our fieldwork lays the

foundation for better informing the stage on which the Patuca Dams are set. In the following chapter, I will discuss the multiplicity of actors and issues influencing the process of dam construction and how this, beyond the need for hydroelectric power to meet energy demands, is pushing the Patuca Dams forward at an alarming rate.

Chapter V. What Is Driving Patuca III *Now*?

Introduction

Given how little we know about the Patuca River and the impacts of the project on the social and environmental landscapes, why is Patuca III moving forward? And more importantly, why is the project moving forward *now*? If the main reason is for energy production, why were the Patuca Dams Project tabled and not in motion say 5 years ago as Honduras has been in a continued state of energy crisis? To address these questions, I draw on Jackson's critique of who he refers to as "the globalizers" that made El Cajón a reality to better inform the forces accelerating the creation of Patuca III today.

I outline five key forces influencing the construction of Patuca III: (1) China's growing influence in Latin America and Latin American development (including role or absence of traditional development agents, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and World Bank) (2) Honduras' neoliberal plan known as "Honduras Is Open for Business, (3) the Honduran coup of 2009 and governance in the post-coup regime (including the role of ENEE and other federal government agencies), (4) increased narcotrafficking in Honduras and subsequent land grabs, and (5) involvement of the international academic and activist community. The final force of the international solidarity network may be considered more of a result of the first four agents involved, which is also enveloped in a widespread resistance movement in Honduras that will be described in the next chapter. The objective of this crucial chapter is to explore the economic, political, and social climates that influence both the potential successes and failures of Patuca III and how these international forces can affect a population of about 1,500 Tawahka in the remote Moskitia.

1. Role of China in Honduras: Accelerator of Development Projects

More often than not, it is easy to declare China a threat to United States hegemony and the decline of the US as a sole world superpower. From this point of view, targeting China for the failures of new development projects appears straightforward, but many complexities exist in terms of China's role on the development scene, as is played out on the ground in La Moskitia with Sinohydro and the Export-Import Bank. In fact, the Patuca Dams are a prime example of China picking up slated dam projects, rather than introducing brand new dam infrastructure proposals, making the intervention seem less villainous. But as one scholar suggests, optimists have exaggerated the positive economic benefits of Chinese engagement with Latin America and pessimists have exaggerated the negative political impacts (Jenkins, 2010). Therefore, this section is dedicated to exploring what it means to have China on the development scene in Latin America: the dominant discourses around China's role, how Chinese intervention is being received in the Western Hemisphere, the ways in which China legitimizes its role and its true motives, similarities and dissimilarities of Chinese engagements in Latin America versus Western engagements, and how China's position links to other "globalizers."

How China Legitimizes Its Growing Influence

Based on what I can deduct from a literature review, it appears that China is legitimizing its role as lender and donor to Latin America in a variety of ways, although the most prominent and overarching theme is that China is simply *not* the United States. I have outlined three main methods in which China is justifying its rise on the Latin American development scene. First, China is fostering a feeling of South-South camaraderie, evoking a sense of empathy with developing nations as China strides forward in economic development. Through China's

accumulation of capital, China has the power to build a new economic order with the rise of the South into a more multipolar world (Gallagher, 2010). Evidence of South-South building lies in the association of BRIC state partnerships, such as Chinese and Brasilian trade (Iturre & Mendes, 2010).

Second, China offers what is known as the Beijing Consensus as an alternative to the Washington Consensus (Ituree & Mendes, 2010). Those left-leaning Latin American nations looking for an alternative to neoliberal policies, and thus the United States, have been looking toward the Chinese model and China as an alternative development and trading partner (Iturre & Mendes, 2010). Along with the idea of South-South collaboration, the Beijing Consensus counters the US North-South relationship (Iturre & Mendes, 2010). The vision of a new model of state-led economic development is to focus, among other things, on economies with strained relationships with Washington (Kurlantzik, 2006).

Finally, China engages with Latin America because of the opportunity Latin America poses for development assistance and investment. Currently, Latin America is a region that is not necessarily at the top of the list as a recipient when it comes to development aid or national security surveillance, that is, in regards to US foreign policy. As the United States has been distracted by fighting the War on Terror since September 11th, Latin America has been relatively neglected in foreign policy opening up space for China to increase involvement in the region (Iturre & Mendes, 2010; Kurlantzick, 2006; Pham, 2010). With this window of opportunity, China has been able to fulfill the void for infrastructure projects, trade agreements, and foreign aid.

Critiques of China's Justifications for Involvement in the Americas

However, the listed reasons for which China justifies its involvement in Latin America are also critiqued by the same scholars cited above among others. In the first case of the South supporting the South in order to create a multipolar world, Jenkins (2010) claims this goal is not being realized because strengths between China and Latin American nations are not being shared equally through trade, therefore, uneven development is still perpetuated. Iturre & Mendes (2010) support this claim by stating the relationship is uneven because the structure of the relationships is not truly South-South, but a re-imagined North-South relationship. Further, Iturre & Mendes contend that Latin American nations are keen to accept the Beijing Consensus without seriously analyzing what this means for the future: "Eager to abandon the shadow of the United States and the neoliberal recipes which have had such severe economic and social consequences, Latin American political leaders have welcomed the 'Beijing Consensus' without seriously considering the negative impact" (2010, p 139).

The rise of the South through the Beijing Consensus is also misleading in the sense that China has moved away from supporting communist insurgencies and has opened its economy to new markets and commodity exports to make its growth a reality (Kurlantzick, 2006). This marks not only a move from developing to a more developed state but also away from socialist sympathies. Thus Kurlantzick warns: "At this point, China has made few difficult demands on countries in Latin America, so, for now nations in the region get a free ride from China's involvement, benefitting from aid, investment, and diplomacy without having to make significant sacrifices to win Beijing's favor" (2006, p 33-34).

Further Discourses on China in the Western Hemisphere

Additional perceptions of China in the Western Hemisphere are mixed and dependent upon an individual's worldview. From the most conservative perspective found in the US State Department and foreign policy, there is a tendency to feel threatened by the distance closing between China and Latin America, or what has been dubbed America's "backyard" (Pham, 2010). There is an urgency to renew ties with Latin America so as to protect US national security and to foster regional cooperation in an era of globalization (Pham, 2010). The State believes China's national strategies of "going out" (*zouchuqu zhanlue*), "peaceful rise" (*heping jueqi*), and "democracy in international relations" (*guoji*) are "penetrating" Latin America (Pham, 2010). One example of which is China joining the IDB in 2009 allowing the nation to participate in major infrastructure projects (Pham, 2010). In sum: "…the PRC's provision of assistance without conditionality, especially of problematic regimes, should likewise be seen for what it is: an undermining of the efforts of the United States and others to promote better governance in the region" (Pham, 2010, p 376).

In contrast, there are those in the United States who do not believe China is attempting to antagonize the US. Reasons for this include: Latin America is in the US's sphere of influence, China has an inferior military to the US, China is avoiding unilateral contribution to Latin American security so as not to mislead the US, China needs American capital and technology, and China must maintain a positive relationship with the United States because Taiwan desires recognition from the US (Li, 2007). Therefore: "Fewer countries have a greater stake than China in preserving the current world order, rooted in a globalized economy with its free flows of goods, services, and capital. It is in China's interests to encourage political stability and

economic prosperity in Latin America. China long ago ceased being a revolutionary power" (Li, 2007, p 838).

Finally, many Latin American nations aim to decrease economic dependence and interactions with the United States. This is important for nations like Venezuela that are at odds with US foreign policy and seek to build trade agreements for primary commodities such as oil with China (Iturre & Mendes, 2010). Small, impoverished countries like Honduras welcome China's advancement because this growing relationship with and recognition from China evokes a sense of legitimacy for Honduras in global economy and diplomacy (Garcia, n.d.).

China's true goals and strategies in Latin America: Case of the Patuca Dams

I broadly dissect China's true reasons for involvement in Latin America into two camps: one to sustain economic growth and the other to build political clout. I have identified three main strategies to sustain economic growth. The first is to expand the frontiers of markets. This does not necessarily mean China is interested in buying manufactured goods from Latin America but rather to flood Latin American markets with Chinese production, which actually leaves little room for Latin American countries to develop economically (Jenkins, 2010). Second, China requires locations to invest capital and labor so as to maintain domestic economic growth. Speaking specifically to the Patuca Dams, the project is estimated to cost $1200 million and 750 Chinese technical workers will be contracted by Sinohydro ("Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Patuca III," 2011 Mayo 10). Finally, China is outstripping its domestic supply of natural resources and is turning to Latin America for primary commodities that will provide energy, feed a growing Chinese population, and be translated into manufactured goods (Gallagher, 2010). Through dam construction, the relatively untouched Moskitia region will thus likely be opened to the

extraction of timber, oil, gold, and other minerals; rainforests can be cleared for industrial agriculture and rivers and reservoirs used for fish farming.

Coupling with economic development is growing political power. China can achieve this in a couple of ways. First, Central America stands out globally as a region of the world that recognizes Taiwan as its own nation (Jenkins, 2010). To promote the "one China" policy, China can sway governments' allegiance to the PRC with aid and infrastructure projects, like Patuca III (Jenkins, 2010). Likewise, providing development aid earns China points with what is called Official Development Aid in international organizations. Lastly, increasing this scorecard of points and allies around the world, China aims to boost its global image as a world leader.

International Contracting—Engineering and Finance—Under One China

China provides a very unique international development package, thus changing the landscape in which large-scale development projects are carried out. In the case of Patuca III, as is also the case for dams building by China in other Latin American, African, and Asian countries, China provides an all-in-one development option. China's semi-state and state owned enterprises control the whole scope of project implementation. This reduces the need for international contracts from various nations and transnational corporations. This had been the case for Patuca II and El Cajón, where multiple foreign contractors and traditional financiers like the World Bank and IDB were heavily involved. For Patuca III, planning, construction, and finance will all fall under the realm of semi-stated owned Sinohydro and the EXIM Bank.

Increasingly, China has taken the place of World Bank as the leader in financing large-scale development projects. It seems clear that in many respects that China's current lending practices parallel those of the World Bank circa 1980-90, which encapsulates the time El Cajon

was planned and built. I have drawn parallels between the two lenders through their shared characteristics, such as: a) lack of accountability to recipient nations; b) lack of transparency within the process of lending; c) lack of safeguards and environmental standards in terms of project construction; d) act as principle international finance lenders; e) interest in one-size-fits-all, single massive infrastructure projects, often justified in the name of modernization and economic development of developing nations. (personal communication with Aguirre, 12/13/2011).

As the World Bank's practices of this type were subjected to ever-greater scrutiny, it ceased to fund mega-projects such as dams[1]. It is nevertheless important to look back at the Bank's role in cases such as El Cajón to better understand projects being implemented now with China's increasing role on the development scene. It is this accelerated rate and massive amount of available Chinese finance offered outside of traditional lending institutions that could lead to changes in international development. Essentially, the narrative captured by El Cajón is all too familiar to the climate of dam building in Honduras today, substituting the World Bank with China.

While China takes the lead in development finance, the World Bank has responded with its new "Program-For-Results" or P4R (Hurwitz, 2012 January 31). This loan instrument is meant to compete with emerging financiers like China and Brasil, but instead of providing finance, the World Bank will provide funds to export technical know-how, such as how to connect transmission lines for dam-produced electricity. This is a technique that allows the Bank

[1] But in some ways the Bank too is slipping in upholding regulations and standards for these development projects. Goodland, an employee of the Bank for 23 years, worked to protect the environment, but claims the Bank has regressed since the 1990s, putting private interest ahead of public interest and laxing safeguards (Goodland, 2007 October 22).

to maintain involvement in infrastructure projects and push its own agenda. The question remains: how will the Bank uphold and integrate safeguards into projects that nations like China often lack? According to Grace Mang, China Program Director for International Rivers, there is hope for more stringent standards from Sinohydro because it is important for China to build a respectable image in the international arena (personal correspondence, 12/13/2011).

Forging Ahead: Sino-Honduran Relationship Building

So, the question remains, why would China and Honduras choose to move forward in constructing Patuca III in light of the risks associated with the project and the failure of El Cajón? Essentially, I hypothesize that Honduras is interested in large-scale development projects as a symbol of moving away from poverty and to show its development potential. Additionally, Honduras will be able to produce at least some energy for internal consumption with hopes to export as well. Finally, Honduras is interested in growing a business relationship with China, and China likewise is interested in this relationship for capital and political investments. As stated, regardless of the potential losses and risks associated with the dam, China will have access to something more precious: a reserve of natural resources, including gold, timber, and oil, in La Moskitia and elsewhere in the country. In sum, China has the power to implement Patuca III because the nation can freely invest capital and labor, without concerns for return on the actual project. Instead, China is accelerating Patuca III in order to gain access to La Moskitia's natural resources.

2. The 2009 Military Coup d'État and Post-coup Regime

By Jackson's definition, the globalizers are not only international actors but also the national individuals in power and the institutions complicit in realizing the international agenda within their home nation. The Honduran government is a great stakeholder in development projects, and therefore, it is necessary to examine the most recent events that have reshaped the political climate in Honduras: the 2009 coup d'état that ousted democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya, popularly known as Mel, from Honduras.

History of the 2009 Coup

To retrace the events leading up to the coup, we must begin with Zelaya's proposition to create a referendum as to whether or not the people of Honduras would like to place a question on the 2009 November ballot asking if they would be in favor of a constitutional convention (Joyce, 2010). This proposal, and Zelaya's overall pro-poor and land reform propensities, destabilized Honduran elite, who unwelcomed Zelaya's consultation of Honduran citizens to determine if they would prefer rewriting the constitution to create greater participation in government (Joyce, 2010). This alleged move to the left also destabilized the United States' interests in the nation, stimulating a reaction from the Honduran elite and their US counterparts to remove Zelaya from his post (Joyce, 2010). As the story goes, Zelaya was taken out of his presidential home in the early morning hours of June 28, 2009 by armed military at the command of conservative Honduran Congressmen and the US Department of State (Joyce, 2010).

The months after the coup set the stage for the political climate we see today in Honduras. Michelleti, President of the National Congress, was sworn in as president after Zelaya

was exiled from the country for his 'unconstitutional' actions (Joyce, 2010). The summer of 2009 was marked by police and military brutality against opponents of the coup, the suspension of freedom of speech and assembly, staunch curfews, and harassment against media who released information about the de facto government's repression (Joyce, 2010). The de facto regime was not recognized by the United Nations, the Organization of American States, nor most Latin American nations (Joyce, 2010). The United States, however, cancelled visas and suspended non-military aid pressuring the coup government, though simultaneously left intact military aid and was slow to acknowledge the coup as a coup, therefore negotiating with and backing the Micheletti government (Joyce, 2010). The United States looked toward elections in the fall.

Three months of campaigning led up to the November 29, 2009 elections for a new president. This move was promoted by the United States and Honduran governments in the name of democracy. According to Secretary of State Hilary Clinton: "By voting in the November 29 presidential election in Honduras, the Honduran people expressed their commitment to a democratic future for their country…They turned out in large numbers, and they threw out, in effect, the party of both President Zelaya and the de facto leader, Mr. Micheletti" (Joyce, 2010). Suspiciously, two weeks prior to the election, Michelleti was made a member of Congress for life (Joyce, 2010). This 'democratic' election was helped along by 5,000 military reservists, 12,000 policemen, and 11,000 soldiers who monitored the polls (Joyce, 2010).

The current President Lobo, candidate of the right-wing Nationalist Party, won the election with 56% of the vote (Joyce, 2010). The US State Department declared that the "turnout appears to have exceeded that of the last presidential election. This shows that given the opportunity to express themselves, the Honduran people have viewed the election as an

important part of the solution to the political crisis in their country" (Corcoran, 2010, p 47). All the while, the US media neglected to report that the US funded and trained the Honduran military that executed the coup (some of whom had been trained at the School of the Americas), the plane carrying Zelaya out of Honduras was refueled at an American-Honduran shared airbase before exiting the country, the US had no intentions of reinstating 'leftist' Zelaya to power and instead recognized "coup authorities as legitimate political actors" (Corcoran, 2010, p 47), and illegitimate voting took place in the election leading to the declaration of Lobo receiving the majority. All the while, the Honduran government continued to target its opponents in the National Front Against the Coup d'État in Honduras (Joyce, 2010).

Permeation of Post-Coup Politics: Observations on the Ground

In December 2009, Zelaya returned to Honduras and took refuge in the Brasilian embassy in order to negotiate with Lobo's government (Joyce, 2010). This fueled the anti-coup movement, known as the National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP), or the *Frente* (Frank, 2010). During our time in Honduras, Zelaya once again returned to Tegucigalpa and was ushered in by thousands of people belonging to the *Frente* who waited for him at the airport. This huge resistance movement against the coup and current regime has taken the campaign to the streets, and indigenous people have participated in their protests and marches as attested by Benítez.

Benítez seated at desk in Alianza Verde office with the FNRP flag in the background (photo: S. Santiago)

In light of an aggressive and brutal regime opposed by coalitions across the country, a deep fear has been instilled in the Honduran population. Further, the militarized government has worked to silence any subaltern or oppositional voices through practices of expulsion, torture, and assassinations. The indigenous voice, which has always been under-represented (in the sense of official representation in the government) has been especially marginalized. The Tawahka is one such voice that has been particularly threatened. Before, during, and after our month in Honduras, indigenous leaders had gone into hiding or temporary exile from Honduras to avoid arrest.

This has made it especially difficult, dangerous, and critical for an indigenous coalition to speak out against Patuca III and demand free, prior, and informed consent in regards to construction. Although Zelaya's administration may not have prevented Patuca III from being realized, the dams were tabled during his presidency and have been resurrected during Lobo's first term. It is projects such as Patuca III that Lobo's administration and the Honduran elite are supporting and accelerating. Lobo himself placed the first stones at Piedras Amarillas in May 2011 ("Hoy colocan," 2011 May 16; "Lobo inicia construcción," 2011 May 17). Lobo has not only worked to provide amnesty for the six military authorities who executed the coup, but "He has also put forth a neoliberal development project, called the National Plan, which will aim to eliminate seven state agencies and supposedly eliminate extreme poverty by 2038" (Joyce, 2010, p 11). We see that those in power in this regime are complicit with projects like Patuca III and actively silencing the opposition.

Government Agencies Involved in Patuca III: Restructuring of ENEE

ENEE has been one of the main government agencies involved in hydropower projects in Honduras. As discussed, ENEE is responsible for collecting the necessary data to best inform the construction of Patuca III. During the construction of El Cajón, ENEE was one of the main players executing the project, although some ENEE engineers did not believe the dam was worth building because of the associated economic and ecological risks (Jackson, 2005). However, ENEE's role in projects like Patuca III is under scrutiny as the IDB wants the agency to be privatized before providing any loans to the Honduran government, according to the unidentified IDB official with whom McSweeney spoke. However, Honduran elites benefit from the current

structure of ENEE, and there have been strikes against ENEE reorganization since the June 2009 coup. This situation highlights the changing political climate in Honduras.

"Restructuring is the same as Privatizing—STENER" Protest outside of ENEE offices in Tegucigalpa (photo: S. Santiago).

To conclude this section, the post-coup government in Honduras is accelerating Patuca III by silencing the voices of any opponent, including indigenous peoples and their resistance to being implicated in state-led development projects. Allowing the dam to proceed also fits with the government's long-term strategies for securing La Moskitia for elite capture of its land, water, and forests in particular.

3. "Honduras Is Open for Business": Liberalization of the State

Under the administration of President Porfirio Lobo, Honduras has literally opened its borders to foreign investors in the hopes of attracting foreign direct investment (Republic of Honduras, 2011). This was a new development we learned about on the ground by speaking with

Tawahka located in Tegucigalpa, who feared the impacts this would have on the average Honduran and indigenous person's livelihood. Projects like Patuca III are encouraged through the "Honduras Is Open for Business" program, changing the socioeconomic and political landscape of the country in the name of modernization. According to *La Tribuna*, "Honduras Open for Business" was an international conference of 400 foreign businessmen from 75 countries and 800 nationals that came, was, and went on May 6, 2011 ("'Honduras Open for Business,'" 2011 May 10).

Celio and Edgardo standing in front of a "Honduras Is Open for Business" poster in Toncontín International Airport, Tegucigalpa. (photo: K. McSweeney)

The main goal of this campaign is to attract investment in infrastructure and energy production in Honduras, which is where Patuca III fits into the mix of attraction of foreign investment ("'Honduras Open for Business,'" 2011 May 10). Even though the proposals for the project were not made at this conference, the climate for dam building has been set. The goal is to move toward political and legal stability and overall "progress." In this article, government

ministers endorse this project as a way to reduce poverty through access to jobs, education, and security ("'Honduras Open for Business,'" 2011 May 10). The article celebrates the event for bringing together investors from around the world. The following day, El País announced the council of ministers pledged to support President Porfirio Lobo ("Crean comisiones," 2011 May 11).

Trade liberalization of the state plays a huge role in building Patuca III because this project fits directly under Lobo's Honduras Is Open for Business' call for infrastructure and energy development projects by foreign direct investors, i.e. China. Whether or not the dam generates electricity, however, is less important than the government's desire to demonstrate that it is investing in infrastructure and upholding its promises to regional integration plans.

4. Enter Narco-traffickers and Subsequent Land Grabs

Stories on the Ground

Honduran newspapers we collected during our research trip were littered with horrific and violent stories related to increasing drug trafficking through Honduras. For example, from May 9th through 12th, multiple Honduran newspapers covered the story of a small plane that originated in Colombia, and after landing in Tegucigalpa, was loaded with $2.3 million. The plane was then detained en route in Panama. Interestingly, the plane was loaded with twenty-dollar bills ("Investigan si dólares," 2011 May 10). Those on board included two American pilots, 2 young Hondurans, 2 Colombians, and a Panamanian official ("Fiscalia Investigará," 2011 May 11). It was widely assumed that this event is associated with drug trafficking and that the money would be laundered in Panama, although Panama may not have been the final destination of the plane ("Identifican a la empresa," 2011 May 12).

A June 1st article in *El Tiempo* talks about a Colombian woman found unconscious in her hotel room in Tegucigalpa who was then taken to a local hospital to recover from the trauma ("Colombiana llevaba," 2001 June 1). The reason? She was carrying 46 1-ounce capsules of heroin packaged in 5 cm latex bags in her stomach. Not all of the packages passed causing cardiac and renal problems. She had not willingly consumed the packages.

Another article connects the violence associated with drug trafficking and the struggle for land. *El Tiempo* ("Sobreviviente de masacre," 2011 May 17) reported an incident in which hit men from the Mexican drug cartel Los Zetas killed and decapitated 29 people on a Guatemalan farm when looking for the farm's owner. This story appeared various times in international news sections of the papers, providing evidence of increased drug-related violence and the presence of Mexican cartels in Central America.

The "War" on Drugs

Honduran newspapers (all owned by pro-coup business elites) also strive to disseminate the message that the Honduran government is gaining control on narco-trafficking. *El Tiempo* reported on May 16th that the Colombian ambassador to Honduras, Francisco Canossa, applauded Honduran authorities for their fight against narco-trafficking. Canossa offered the experience and insights from Colombia's own history of drug interdiction to help Honduras reach its goals of drug eradication. On May 26th, El Heraldo ("Jefe de la DEA," 2011 May 26) quoted the DEA to assert that Panama, Guatemala, and Honduras are the countries used most for trafficking drugs and storing South American cocaine en route to the United States via Mexico. These countries are especially susceptible because, according to the DEA, they have inadequate policies and training, porous frontiers, and corruption. In order to address this issue, Central

American presidents are developing a regional security plan that may cost $900 million, and the US has pledged $300 million towards this effort ("Jefe de la DEA," 2011 May 26).

Narco-trafficking Redesigns Social and Environmental Landscapes

One interview with an American geologist who has worked in Honduras for over 20 years provided invaluable insights to narcotrafficking in Honduras. The geologist regards the drug situation in Honduras as "…just a mess—once these groups [narcos] get into the country, there's so much money, they bribe their way up the chain. You can't control them…violence is astronomical. It's a free-for-all. The Tawahka have no clout. That's the way it is all over Honduras" (McSweeney interview, 23 June 2011). In his opinion, Honduras is an Organized Crime Country, where the monster of narcotrafficking is uncontrollable.

One major player in the increase of narco-trafficking and violence is Miguel Facusse, an elite of Lebanese descent referred to as a "Turco" in Honduras, who leads a clan of narcos and controls the majority of privately held land in Honduras; control of land is a massive and integral part of enabling narco-trafficking as it is a means to invest (i.e. launder) narco-money in industrial agriculture and provides a secure area for the storage and transport of drugs, out of the hands of authorities. The geologist adds that as the population substantially grows, there is a growing struggle for land and resources; narco-traffickers have no concern for indigenous people or even *campesinos*. Thus, the drug situation makes the need for land and resources all the more violent. The geologist attributes the growth of trafficking with the exit of the DEA in Honduras when the nation left the OAS after President Zelaya.

Changes in the landscape other than land control include the use of highways as landing strips and land routes for trafficking. For instance, the geologist said planes are landing on

highways in the Department of Olancho, a department near the Patuca Dams Project characterized by cattle ranching, and wars among rival drug groups are going on in the area. The geologist describes the Canal Seco, a north-south highway that originally ran through Tegucigalpa, as a monstrous and strategic trans-isthmian route in Central America. He claims this route is perfect for narco-trafficking. It was built and improved explicitly for truck traffic with money contributed by other Central American nations. There are no customs points, providing an "autobahn"-like experience for trafficking from South America to the US. The geologist hypothesized that the completion of Canal Seco was a big catalyst for attracting narcotrafficking through Honduras. He concludes Honduras is wide open, "stuff [drugs] just blows through" (K. McSweeney, personal communication, 6/23/2011). Ironically, "the Canal Seco is set up to be the Second Panama Canal—the name's an allusion to its importance" (K. McSweeney, personal communication, 6/23/2011). With infrastructure such as this, narcotrafficking is not only encouraged but effectively endorsed in Honduras.

In fact, we saw artifacts of narco-trafficking throughout our stay and discussed the fear this has been instilling in Tawahka and Miskitu communities. One of the most obvious examples presented itself in the coastal trading hub of Brus Laguna, where houses on stilts are the norm in this marshy area. However, there was a great distinction amongst homes in this impoverished region. Fishing families who have found packages of cocaine in the ocean and then sold them were able to improve the wooden structures of their houses. More shockingly, huge gated compounds have been built by those families who are directly active in trafficking drugs, visually demonstrating huge disparities in the socio-economic landscape.

Photograph of a large narco-funded home being built in Brus Laguna. (photo: Z. Pearson).

Overall, we see that narco-trafficking has increased in Honduras as has the violence associated with it. A key trafficking route within Honduras is through La Moskitia. The result has been to subdue and intimidate indigenous resistance, such that leaders who speak up to assert regional sovereignty, whether in response to drugs or dams, are targeted. This combines with the oppressive political climate to have a chilling effect on resistance movements overall. Nevertheless, resistance is occurring.

5. The International Academic and Activist Community: Building Social Capital

Introduction to the International Network

Though some names have been mentioned earlier in this paper, this space will be used to introduce activists and academics working in the United States and Honduras against the construction of the Patuca Dams and to describe the relationships amongst these various actors. What is special about these individuals is that they all share an affinity with La Moskitia and worked on the campaigns against Patuca II in 1998 and 2008.

From the United States, main players have included Dr. Kendra McSweeney, associate professor in Geography. She has been working with Tawahka communities since the 1990s, beginning with a development project through the Harvard Institute. Her expertise on Tawahka interactions with their environment, especially the rainforest and Patuca River, and trustful relationships with Tawahka have contributed to supporting a Tawahka voice. Dr. Erik Nielsen, assistant professor of Environmental Policy at the School of Earth Sciences & Environmental Sustainability at Northern Arizona University has also been an integral partner in the Patuca II campaigns. A final academic who has offered his scientific expertise includes an American scientist, who will remain unnamed, who has been working in La Moskitia and Honduran universities for over 20 years.

Additionally, there are two main contacts with US based NGOs. The first is Monti Aguirre from International Rivers, which is located in Berkeley, California. Aguirre is the Coordinator of the Latin American program in this organization, has visited indigenous communities along the Patuca, and has worked on campaigns against Patuca II in 1998 and 2008. IR has not, however, yet launched a formal campaign for Patuca III because of lack of funding. The second representative is Paula Palmer, Director of Cultural Survival's Global Response program located in Boulder, Colorado. The focus of this organization is to protect indigenous livelihoods through letter-writing campaigns to government officials. Palmer has been involved in both Patuca II campaigns and now Patuca III.

On the other end of the relationship, Honduran counterparts are mainly found in indigenous grassroots organizations. There are two of the main indigenous leaders who have been in frequent contact with especially Aguirre and Palmer. The first individual is Miriam Miranda, leader of the Afro-Honduran Fraternal Organization known as OFRANEH,

representative of Creole and Garifuna groups along Honduras' north coast. The second is Norvin Goff, the youngest president of MASTA. These organizations fall under Mosquitia Pawisa Apiska, or MOPAWI, the indigenous non-governmental development agency of La Moskitia. They are both very active in resisting the construction of Patuca III.

Additionally, there are two very important and politically active Tawahka brothers, Lorenzo Tinglas and Edgardo Benítez. Benítez has served as the main Tawahka liaison to Honduran government agencies and lives in Tegucigalpa running the Tawahka organization Alianza Verde. Tinglas is former president of FITH (Federación Indígena Tawahka de Honduras) and in 2011 served as president of COMPAH (Confederation of Ethnic Peoples of Honduras).

These individuals have together created a strong alliance that has in the past influenced the cancellation of the Patuca Dams. One example of current collaboration includes all of these individuals (except for the geologist, Tinglas, and Benítez) writing and signing onto a letter sent to the IDB regarding finance for Patuca III. Others have been involved in the larger research team while we were in the field, including university students from Tegucigalpa, Pearson, and myself.

Is It Necessary, Beneficial to Have International Vested Interests?

As suggested, this network requires people to communicate and move across borders, more so for those based in the United States to make trips to Honduras. Quite often during these moves and transitions, there is a sense of what feminist fieldworker Katz dubs "betweenness" that lends toward an enriched experience of moving between cultures and issues, better informing research goals and experiences (Katz, 1992).

Through these informed interactions, coalitions to support indigenous communities from both Honduras and the United States have been essential in the Patuca II campaigns. According to Edward F. Fischer, a professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University, debt crises lead to neoliberal reforms that in turn create new spaces for activism (2007). International organizations, like Cultural Survival and International Rivers, gain legitimacy for their work by teaming up with grassroots organizations and grassroots campaigns in turn gain legitimacy through their associations with Northern NGOs (Fischer, 2007).

Importantly, however, international organizations have the power to pressure foreign governments from the outside, which is essential to the fight, as indigenous movements are "confined to areas deemed non-threatening to state power" (Fischer, 2007, p 8). International organizations then become important when indigenous groups do not have official representation in federal government (Fischer, 2007). Thus, coalitions between North and South, especially exemplified in the case of the anti-Patuca Dams movement, has provided social capital to Tawahka, Miskitu, Pech, and Garifuna populations to help these communities move toward economic and political ends (Fischer, 2007).

In the context of the Patuca III campaign, Palmer described a similar need for international collaboration. She described three main pieces of the current campaign: 1) the international movement of science led by Nielson to rally against the risks associated with the dams (However, he has not had much time to devote to the campaign, worrying Palmer that without key people the campaign becomes very vulnerable); 2) legal actions in Honduras (The indigenous coalition has hired lawyer Santiago Flores to represent their grievances by taking the government of Honduras to the constitutional court because for its neglect for free, prior, and

informed consent from affected indigenous people for Patuca III); 3) the role of international lenders like IDB who has contracted a Swedish firm to carry out an environmental impact statement in the Moskitia (personal communication, 12/7/2012). This is meant to fix weaknesses in the 2008 assessment made for one rather than three dams, in regards to the socio-cultural impacts and technical nature of the dams.

In sum, the results of China's role in Patuca III, an oppressive government that eliminates the Tawahka voice, government-led trade liberalization in Honduras, and increased narco-trafficking and the struggle for land and resource rights all contribute to a climate that is considerably more hostile than that in 1998 or 2008. This makes a solidarity network more urgent yet also weaker. Because China is implementing projects like Patuca III all over the world, international attention to La Moskitia is diluted. Because of a hostile atmosphere in Honduras and a diluted resistance movement, the goal may not be to stop Patuca III from being built, but instead to integrate Tawahka voice into governance and processes surrounding the dam.

Conclusions on the Convergence of Issues

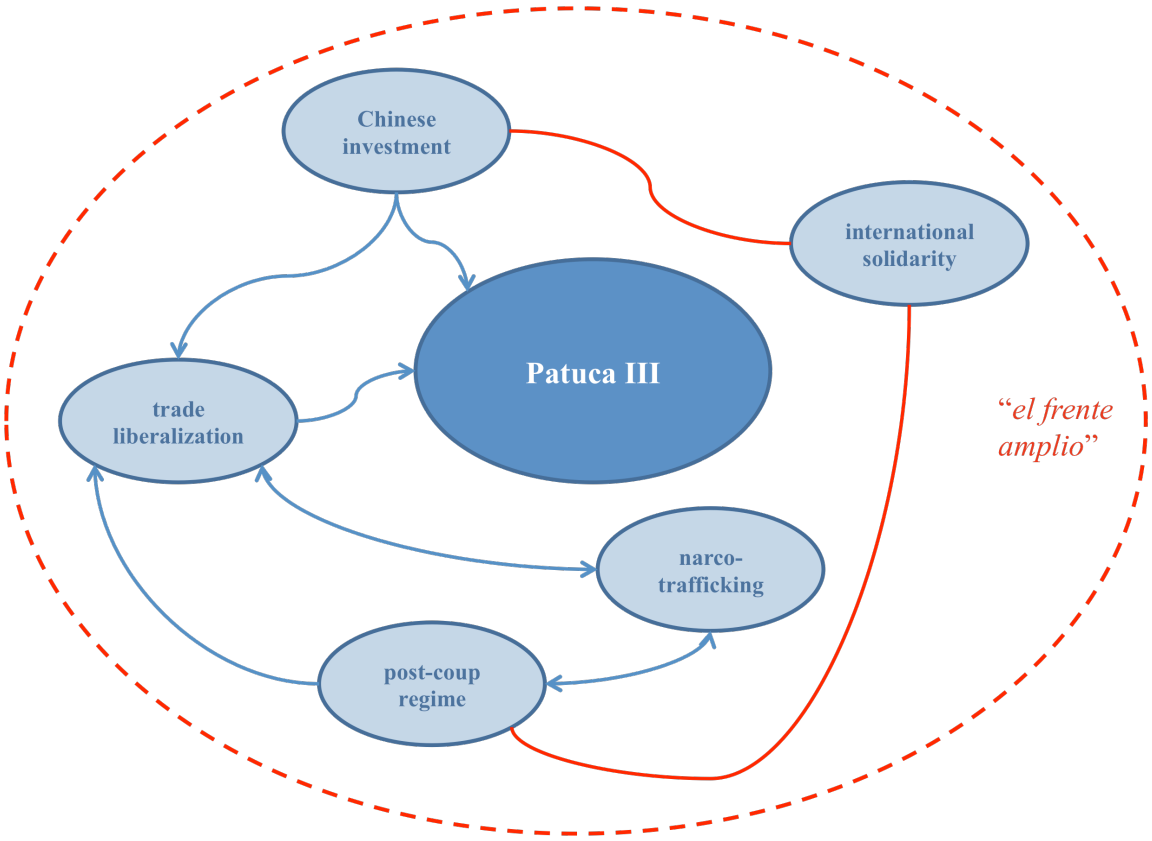

Figure 6: This mind map is meant to show the important forces and their interconnections in influencing the construction of Patuca III. Those with blue arrows are facilitating the construction of Patuca III, whereas those with red arrows are working against construction.

Discussion of China's role in international development, the post-coup regime, liberalization of the state of Honduras, narco-trafficking, and the international network of activists and academics shape the environment in which Patuca III has been proposed. The convergence of these individuals, institutions, and issues will determine if and how the dams will be built. They will also determine how the landscape of power will look in terms of winners and losers—who dictates, which interests take precedent, if there will be a movement against this power, and if power can therefore be redistributed. I suspect this is an ideal time to construct

Patuca III because of the previously described interactions accelerating the dams where the powerful forces of Chinese firms and Honduran government and narco elites stand to get rich from the project even if it, like El Cajón, is a disaster and extract the natural resources of La Moskitia without considering the rights of indigenous peoples, who stand to lose everything with the realization of this project.

In reference to the schematic showing the overlapping relationships amongst these varying topics, I would like to sum up the main themes to derive from this chapter (Figure 6). Moreover, my goal is to demonstrate how all of these themes can and are penetrating the everyday life and futures of those living in La Moskitia.

In sum, China's role in planning and constructing Patuca III has been welcomed through liberalization, as demonstrated in "Honduras Is Open for Business," and has been made possible through relationships with the post-coup Honduran government, which is in fact made up of elites who make narco-trafficking a reality in Honduras (ie: neglect porous borders, do not in-state authority and customs check points, build infrastructure such as the Canal Seco that all facilitate the movement of drugs) or are themselves actively involved in narco-trafficking. Government-supported plans for Patuca III and increased narco-trafficking in Honduras intensify instability of rights to land and natural resources that China is ready to control and consume. Therefore, narco-trafficking in conjunction with Sino-Honduran led plans for Patuca III add an additional stress on the relationship between people and environment.

What all of these relationships suggest on a much deeper level is that poverty has not been eliminated or remedied through large-scale neoliberal projects and policies. Rather, poverty is exacerbated in a cycle that invites foreign direct investment at the expense of the environment and native peoples, facilitates increased drug trafficking and the violence that accompanies it,

deepens the struggle for land and resources, and justifies the oppression of freedom of speech and exclusion from government processes. It is also through social tensions and poverty that a widespread movement has evolved in Honduras against such forces (i.e.: post-coup regime, Patuca III, Honduras Is Open for Business, narco-trafficking). The circle that encloses all of these themes is this *frente amplio*, and it is here that we most clearly see the intersection of the international network of activists and academics with the key issues facing indigenous populations in Honduras. As such, this question of resistance will be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

Chapter VI. Hope: The Indigenous Resistance

"That is our worry: how to keep fighting so that they won't go through with building this dam."

–Lorenzo Tinglas, Krausirpi, 24 May 2011

Un Movimiento Amplio: Setting the Scene for a Peoples' Resistance

What is extremely unique about the current political, social, economic, and environmental situation in Honduras right now is that there is an unprecedented peoples' movement stretching across the country and transcending all socio-economic barriers and categorizations. This type of movement did not exist in the past, such as during Patuca II campaigns, but has risen in the wake of the military coup. The *frente amplio*, or *movimiento amplio*, simply means a broad front or movement, and signals the intense civil unrest occurring throughout the country. This unrest springs from a bounty of reasons: oppression of freedom of speech and assembly, low wages and attacks on unionized labor, a failing education system and exploitation of teachers, immense national debt and liberalization of the state, reorganization and privatization of state agencies, and the oppression of women, LGBT, and indigenous voices (Frank, 2010). Thus, this movement that began with the National Front for Popular Resistance (FRNP) in response to the ousting of Zelaya and installation of a de facto regime followed by Lobo's repressive administration has evolved into a strong, collective front battling against all forms of societal oppression (Frank, 2010).

Who's Who in the Resistance

The backbone of FNRP is the traditional labor movement ("teachers, public-sector workers, banana workers, bottling-plant workers") that has been met by new sectors, such as the

women's movement, LGBT movement, indigenous and Afro-indigenous voices, human rights groups, the *campesino* movement, and environmentalists (Frank, 2010, p 7). Because of this wide front, the resistance can be seen as new for many reasons, both for Honduras and Latin America (Frank, 2010). One major reason is the fact the movement does not originate in the left, from an organized Marxist-Leninist party but from a wide-range of groups in opposition to the coup and social injustices in Honduras (Frank, 2010).

Moreover, women are "front and center…as an organized constituency" (Frank, 2010, p 7). Women hold high leadership positions in the movement, especially within the indigenous sector; some of these phenoms include "Berta Cáceres of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), Berta Oliva of the Committee of Family Members of the Disappeared and Detained in Honduras (COFADEH), and Miriam Miranda of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH)" (Frank, 2010, p 7). Accompanying women at the forefront of the leadership are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals. Coordinating with Via Campesina, we see land rights as another central issue to the movement. Finally, we see indigenous groups, including the Lenca, Pech, and Garifuna, integrating their concerns, especially for land use and rights, into the resistance (Frank, 2010). Additionally, "in understanding the Honduran resistance, it's important to distinguish between the Frente, the institutional coordinating body, and the much larger category of all the people who opposed the coup and want to reformulate Honduran society from below (Frank, 2010, p 7). These aligned groups include the thousands of Zelaya loyalists, the leftist Democratic Unification party, and the very poor of the urban slums (Frank, 2010).

Another truly remarkable aspect of the resistance is the commitment to non-violence, a self-described *movimiento pacífico*, that uses the "tactic of exposing the regime's brutality, thus

raising their own moral stature before the public" (Frank, 2010, p 7). Frank quotes a Honduran sociology professor who describes the resistance as a "cultural awakening without precedence" that is directly combating the oligarchs, the military, and the post-coup regime that controls the nation (2010, p 8). Frank concisely divides the multi-vocal battle between the *golpistas* and the people of Honduras (2010). Because of the various outstanding political, social, and economic issues in the country, Frank claims: "In retrospect all the pieces were in place that would explode together once the coup was launched on June 28 and the movement against it snowballed over the course of the summer and fall of 2009" (2010, p 8). In another NACLA contribution, Portillo Villeda succinctly says: "The *golpistas* have unwittingly created an opportune moment for popular sectors to consolidate a powerful oppositional movement" (2010, p 26).

The Resistance in Action

Through the Frente, there have been actions such as hunger and teacher strikes. One exceptional example of a large action that took place in the Aguán Valley, the area where people were relocated after El Cajón, links large-land holders with narco-trafficking and the coup:

> On December 9, five months after the coup, 3,500 campesinos from seven cooperatives organized as the Unified Movement of Campesinos of Aguán (MUCA) staged a land invasion of African oil palm plantations in the Aguán Valley. The lands are owned by Miguel Facussé, the most elite of Honduran oligarchs, who is considered by many to be the big mover and shaker behind the coup (Frank, 2010, p 9).

However, the movement against a brutal and repressive regime has not come without a price: "At least 40 people in the resistance have been killed, more than 3,000 illegally detained, and hundreds raped, beaten, and/or tortured in detention; thousands have lost their jobs for political reasons" in 2010 (Frank, 2010, p 10). Is this immediate and threatening fear escapable?

Through this radical reorganization of society by new and old activist forces, those social groups normally on the periphery are being brought into the very center of debate and re-imagination of society (Portillo Villeda, 2010). The goal of the FNRP is to institutionally include marginalized groups by reestablishing the constitution (Portillo Villeda, 2010), which was exactly the catalyst for the 2009 coup. Therefore, this resistance, which Frank claims has never been before seen in Honduras (a nation she deems least politicized in Latin America without a rebel guerilla movement and characterized by a two party system that lacks a far left), provides a platform for the indigenous movement, especially against Patuca III.

The Resistance and Patuca III: What's New Since Patuca II?

This unprecedented *movimiento amplio* emerges at a time when throughout the world people in both the global North and South are questioning the implications of political and economic capitalist development. A new global resistance, ignited in regional and local levels by one spark or another, is looking for alternatives to the way in which we live and interact with others. A widespread resistance against the Honduran government such as this was not present during the campaigns against Patuca II in 1998 and 2008, offering a strong platform for an indigenous movement against Patuca III.

Although this is a highly new and integral aspect of the anti-dam movement, there are simultaneously many barriers that may or not be overcome by the international solidarity network. Even if the feasibility and potential impacts of the project are still in question, China with the know-how through Sinohydro and finance through the EXIM Bank and the government of Honduras ushering in foreign direct investment as a solution to the energy crisis continue to move forward with the dam. Why would Patuca III not be built in order to respect indigenous

territory and livelihoods at the expense of what is hoped for national economic growth? This extraordinary social movement in Honduras though changes the climate for dam building, creating a hostile and volatile atmosphere in Honduras that the Chinese and the Honduran governments may not be ready to face. In these final sections, I discuss concerns expressed by indigenous peoples of La Moskitia and how they envision the future in light of impending construction of Patuca III.

A Multi-vocal Narrative: What Indigenous Peoples of La Moskitia Fear to Lose

When Lorenzo Tinglas was asked about the natural beauty surrounding us on our last evening in Krausirpi, he replied:

> The indigenous culture is to co-exist with nature—harmony and interrelation with nature and man. Indigenous culture has demonstrated how to co-exist with nature this clearly to the world. That is something I think the indigenous pueblos will have to keep fighting for—how to maintain harmony with Mother Earth. Other cultures are not like this, and that is our worry, our fight, how to stop destruction of these areas, which put our culture and co-existence with nature in this region in danger (personal communication, 5/24/2011).

Many others voiced concerns about how the dams will change Tawahka relationships with the earth and with one another. DelBer, a school teacher and community leader, talked about the impacts Patuca III will have on the entire region, especially as the Moskitia is already "struck by an avalanche of people coming in" for access to land and resources (personal communication, 5/16/2011). He suggested the people of the Moskitia need to demarcate their land in response to these land grabs, though this is difficult to officialize and may not protect their territory.

Kinke Wood, also a school teacher and community leader, was extremely concerned about the river drying up, breaking off communication and transport, and questioned how well organizing against the government can be successful (personal communication, 5/16/2011).

Insightfully, Wood specified that a dialogue, not a protest, should be developed with the government. He also recognized what the people of the Moskitia are up against: "Really I can't imagine what would be the benefits for the population. I understand maybe the government will have a great benefit—the central government and the rest of Honduras and Central America. But here in the Moskitia, there will be little benefit."

From speaking with various Tawahka community members and others living in La Moskitia, there are widespread worries about communicating, traveling, and being interconnected with nature and communities. Without the means to cultivate these relationships, the Tawahka, as well as the Miskitu, Pech, and Garifuna, will be destroyed. Tinglas declares: "From all sides the danger is extermination. The government's plans are all slow extermination." (personal communication, 5/24/2011).

Obstacles to the Fight Against Patuca III

I deduce that the biggest problem with mobilizing against Patuca III is not the lack of political will or organizational ability, but the lack of communication. First, people in the Moskitia are under-informed about the impending dams and have not been approached by the government for consent. Wood said there has been a wide gap in information flowing, by both the government and organized groups. More ominously, indigenous people are silenced, threatened, and afraid to speak out in the climate created by the post-coup regime, narco-trafficking, and land colonization. Therefore, there exists no channel for indigenous groups to access the Honduran government, resulting in the need for strong solidarity in this fight. Those who fought Patuca II are also exhausted from fighting the Patuca Dams time and again. Some leaders are not mobilizing because there are many other immediate, urgent issues at hand (i.e.:

health, land grabs) that it is difficult to prioritize the dam, even though the project will destroy the indigenous way of life. This is especially true because of the dangers associated with speaking out; indigenous leaders must pick the battles they feel they can win and avoid losing their livelihoods and quite possibly their lives. Tinglas attested to this problem:

> Many of us who fought in those times are not now because the environmental organizations supported us a lot then and the government was more accessible. Now the government is all about repression, many people are killed if they talk about their rights. All this repression is because of the coup. People are afraid because the new government kills a lot of people, and are making lists of people to kill. So people are afraid to confront the dam issue (personal communication, 5/24/2011).

And at the same time, the international network against the dams is also struggling with accumulating social capital; funds, staff, and time to support the movement are in some regards lacking, though those that can contribute are working in every avenue possible.

Looking Forward

Despite that fact there is a lack of communication and access to information and the government, there is room to work toward dissemination of information and mobilization of marginalized voices. Our sense of hopelessness can be remedied by the fact that Hondurans are resilient and know how to fight; there are Tawahka who have been and continue to fight the good fight. Wood's suggestion of a dialogue, rather than protest, is very powerful in this regard. Fostering dialogues—amongst indigenous groups, with the Honduran government, and with international actors—may be the hope in this struggle. For example, International Rivers is working toward building a sustained dialogue with Sinohydro, rather than outright protest against the firm, to urge for the implementation of social and environmental safeguards. Further, in this dialogue, IR is highlighting the high risk to investment Sinohydro and the Chinese EXIM

Bank are undertaking in Honduras, where immense social unrest has created instability in the nation.

This past fall, a group of indigenous people of La Moskitia made their way to Tegucigalpa, demanding recognition from the government and asking for a dialogue. The goal is to open up a productive, inclusive dialogue, which is not unlike the goals of the Frente. Sadly, in the end, this really may not be a struggle that prevents the construction of the dams entirely, but a fight for a recognized voice in a hopefully more inclusive and representative Honduran society, starting with free, prior, and informed consent for Patuca III or at least some inclusion in the process. Communication and representation is key to achieve any goals in the future and to preserve Tawahka society and livelihoods as a diverse element of the cultural and environmental landscape of Honduras.

Excerpts from a Tawahka Elder

This piece, as it leaves an uneasy feeling about the future of the Tawahka, will conclude appropriately with the voice of one Tawahka elder, Lucio, who accompanied us at the beginning of our visit in Honduras to Piedras Amarillas, the proposed site of Patuca III, on 13 May 2011. He spoke to us about the devastation the dam will have on the Tawahka while standing at the river's edge, focusing on Tawahka communities being cut off from neighboring communities and commerce. Lucio's testimony was spoken first in Tawahka and then repeated in Spanish. It is translated into English here.

Lucio, at the proposed site for Patuca III at Piedras Amarillas (photo: S. Santiago).

"Right now we are at the dam site.

We're here with 6 people.

I see this dam as a bad thing because it is going to affect the zona Tawahka.

After the dam is built, if a part of it breaks down it will affect the Tawahka and everyone will die.

When the dam is in place we will have more conflict—like trouble with transport.

When the river is really dry the transport is a problem and the traders don't come. We're going to have problems getting salt, manteca, we will have a scarcity when it is really dry. I don't want them to build the dam, we're going to be very affected.

When it is very dry we won't have a highway (the river will be unusable for transport) to the Moskitia. We will be worse off than we are now when the dam comes, there won't be land to live on.

We know that when the dam is here there will be a lot of problems for us as indigenous people. Before, this river had enough water, and now there is not enough—what will happen when the dam comes? There won't be transport for us. We, the indigenous people, don't want them to build the dam.

Nosotros, como indígenas que somos, no queremos que hagan esta presa, punto."

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